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On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life

Foreword

'In any case, I hate everything that merely instructs me without augmenting or directly invigorating my activity.' These words are from Goethe, and they may stand as a sincere *ceterum censeo** at the beginning of our meditation on the value of history. For its intention is to show why instruction without invigoration, why knowledge not attended by action, why history as a costly superfluity and luxury, must, to use Goethe's word, be seriously hated by us – hated because we still lack even the things we need and the superfluous is the enemy of the necessary. We need history, certainly, but we need it for reasons different from those for which the idler in the garden of knowledge needs it, even though he may look nobly down on our rough and charmless needs and requirements. We need it, that is to say, for the sake of life and action, not so as to turn comfortably away from life and action, let alone for the purpose of extenuating the self-seeking life and the base and cowardly action. We want to serve history only to the extent that history serves life: for it is possible to value the study of history to such a degree that life becomes stunted and degenerate – a phenomenon we are now forced to acknowledge, painful though this may be, in the face of certain striking symptoms of our age.

I have striven to depict a feeling by which I am constantly tormented; I revenge myself upon it by handing it over to the public. Perhaps this depiction will inspire someone or other to tell me that he too knows this feeling but that I have not felt it in its pure and elemental state and have certainly not expressed it with the assurance that comes from mature experience. Someone, I say, may perhaps do so: most people, however, will tell me that this feeling is altogether perverse, unnatural, detestable and wholly impermissible, and that by feeling it I have shown myself unworthy of the mighty historical movement which, as is well known, has been in evidence among the Germans particularly for the past two generations. Whatever the case, however, that I should venture a description of my feeling will promote rather than injure general decorum,

**ceterum censeo*: but I'm of the opinion

since it will offer to many the opportunity of paying compliments to the said movement. And for myself I shall gain something that is worth more to me even than decorum – that is, to be publicly instructed and put right about the character of our own time.

This meditation too is untimely, because I am here attempting to look afresh at something of which our time is rightly proud – its cultivation of history – as being injurious to it, a defect and deficiency in it; because I believe, indeed, that we are all suffering from a consuming fever of history and ought at least to recognize that we are suffering from it. But if Goethe was right to assert that when we cultivate our virtues we at the same time cultivate our faults, and if, as everyone knows, a hypertrophied virtue – such as the historical sense of our age appears to be – can ruin a nation just as effectively as a hypertrophied vice: then there can be no harm in indulging me for this once. And it may partly exonerate me when I give an assurance that the experiences which evoked those tormenting feelings were mostly my own and that I have drawn on the experiences of others only for purposes of comparison; and further, that it is only to the extent that I am a pupil of earlier times, especially the Hellenic, that though a child of the present time I was able to acquire such untimely experiences. That much, however, I must concede to myself on account of my profession as a classicist: for I do not know what meaning classical studies could have for our time if they were not untimely – that is to say, acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come.

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Consider the cattle, grazing as they pass you by: they do not know what is meant by yesterday or today, they leap about, eat, rest, digest, leap about again, and so from morn till night and from day to day, fettered to the moment and its pleasure or displeasure, and thus neither melancholy nor bored. This is a hard sight for man to see; for, though he thinks himself better than the animals because he is human, he cannot help envying them their happiness – what they have, a life neither bored nor painful, is precisely what he wants, yet he cannot have it because he refuses to be like an animal. A human being may well ask an animal: 'Why do you not speak to me of your happiness but only stand and gaze at me?' The animal would like to answer, and say: 'The reason is I always forget what I was going to

say' – but then he forgot this answer too, and stayed silent: so that the human being was left wondering.

But he also wonders at himself, that he cannot learn to forget but clings relentlessly to the past: however far and fast he may run, this chain runs with him. And it is a matter for wonder: a moment, now here and then gone, nothing before it came, again nothing after it has gone, nonetheless returns as a ghost and disturbs the peace of a later moment. A leaf flutters from the scroll of time, floats away – and suddenly floats back again and falls into the man's lap. Then the man says 'I remember' and envies the animal, who at once forgets and for whom every moment really dies, sinks back into night and fog and is extinguished for ever. Thus the animal lives *unhistorically*: for it is contained in the present, like a number without any awkward fraction left over; it does not know how to dissimulate, it conceals nothing and at every instant appears wholly as what it is; it can therefore never be anything but honest. Man, on the other hand, braces himself against the great and ever greater pressure of what is past: it pushes him down or bends him sideways, it encumbers his steps as a dark, invisible burden which he can sometimes appear to disown and which in traffic with his fellow men he is only too glad to disown, so as to excite their envy. That is why it affects him like a vision of a lost paradise to see the herds grazing or, in closer proximity to him, a child which, having as yet nothing of the past to shake off, plays in blissful blindness between the hedges of past and future. Yet its play must be disturbed; all too soon it will be called out of its state of forgetfulness. Then it will learn to understand the phrase 'it was': that password which gives conflict, suffering and satiety access to man so as to remind him what his existence fundamentally is – an imperfect tense that can never become a perfect one. If death at last brings the desired forgetting, by that act it at the same time extinguishes the present and all existence and therewith sets the seal on the knowledge that existence is only an uninterrupted has-been, a thing that lives by negating, consuming and contradicting itself.

If happiness, if reaching out for new happiness, is in any sense what fetters living creatures to life and makes them go on living, then perhaps no philosopher is more justified than the Cynic: for the happiness of the animal, as the perfect Cynic, is the living proof of the rightness of Cynicism. The smallest happiness, if only it is present uninterruptedly and makes happy, is incomparably more happiness than the greatest happiness that comes only as an episode, as it were a piece of waywardness or folly, in a continuum of joylessness, desire

and privation. In the case of the smallest or of the greatest happiness, however, it is always the same thing that makes happiness happiness: the ability to forget or, expressed in more scholarly fashion, the capacity to feel *unhistorically* during its duration. He who cannot sink down on the threshold of the moment and forget all the past, who cannot stand balanced like a goddess of victory without growing dizzy and afraid, will never know what happiness is – worse, he will never do anything to make others happy. Imagine the extremest possible example of a man who did not possess the power of forgetting at all and who was thus condemned to see everywhere a state of becoming: such a man would no longer believe in his own being, would no longer believe in himself, would see everything flowing asunder in moving points and would lose himself in this stream of becoming: like a true pupil of Heraclitus, he would in the end hardly dare to raise his finger. Forgetting is essential to action of any kind, just as not only light but darkness too is essential for the life of everything organic. A man who wanted to feel historically through and through would be like one forcibly deprived of sleep, or an animal that had to live only by rumination and ever repeated rumination. Thus: it is possible to live almost without memory, and to live happily moreover, as the animal demonstrates; but it is altogether impossible to *live* at all without forgetting. Or, to express my theme even more simply: *there is a degree of sleeplessness, of rumination, of the historical sense, which is harmful and ultimately fatal to the living thing, whether this living thing be a man or a people or a culture.*

To determine this degree, and therewith the boundary at which the past has to be forgotten if it is not to become the gravedigger of the present, one would have to know exactly how great the *plastic power* of a man, a people, a culture is: I mean by plastic power the capacity to develop out of oneself in one's own way, to transform and incorporate into oneself what is past and foreign, to heal wounds, to replace what has been lost, to recreate broken moulds. There are people who possess so little of this power that they can perish from a single experience, from a single painful event, often and especially from a single subtle piece of injustice, like a man bleeding to death from a scratch; on the other hand, there are those who are so little affected by the worst and most dreadful disasters, and even by their own wicked acts, that they are able to feel tolerably well and be in possession of a kind of clear conscience even in the midst of them or at any rate very soon afterwards. The stronger the innermost roots of a man's nature, the more readily will he be able to assimilate and

appropriate the things of the past; and the most powerful and tremendous nature would be characterized by the fact that it would know no boundary at all at which the historical sense began to overwhelm it; it would draw to itself and incorporate into itself all the past, its own and that most foreign to it, and as it were transform it into blood. That which such a nature cannot subdue it knows how to forget; it no longer exists, the horizon is rounded and closed, and there is nothing left to suggest there are people, passions, teachings, goals lying beyond it. And this is a universal law: a living thing can be healthy, strong and fruitful only when bounded by a horizon; if it is incapable of drawing a horizon around itself, and at the same time too self-centred to enclose its own view within that of another, it will pine away slowly or hasten to its timely end. Cheerfulness, the good conscience, the joyful deed, confidence in the future – all of them depend, in the case of the individual as of a nation, on the existence of a line dividing the bright and discernible from the unilluminable and dark; on one's being just as able to forget at the right time as to remember at the right time; on the possession of a powerful instinct for sensing when it is necessary to feel historically and when unhistorically. This, precisely, is the proposition the reader is invited to meditate upon: *the unhistorical and the historical are necessary in equal measure for the health of an individual, of a people and of a culture.*

First of all, there is an observation that everyone must have made: a man's historical sense and knowledge can be very limited, his horizon as narrow as that of a dweller in the Alps, all his judgments may involve injustice and he may falsely suppose that all his experiences are original to him – yet in spite of this injustice and error he will nonetheless stand there in superlative health and vigour, a joy to all who see him; while close beside him a man far more just and instructed than he sickens and collapses because the lines of his horizon are always restlessly changing, because he can no longer extricate himself from the delicate net of his judiciousness and truth for a simple act of will and desire. On the other hand we have observed the animal, which is quite unhistorical, and dwells within a horizon reduced almost to a point, and yet lives in a certain degree of happiness, or at least without boredom and dissimulation; we shall thus have to account the capacity to feel to a certain degree unhistorically as being more vital and more fundamental, inasmuch as it constitutes the foundation upon which alone anything sound, healthy and great, anything truly human, can grow. The unhistorical is like an atmosphere within which alone life can germinate and with

the destruction of which it must vanish. It is true that only by imposing limits on this unhistorical element by thinking, reflecting, comparing, distinguishing, drawing conclusions, only through the appearance within that encompassing cloud of a vivid flash of light – thus only through the power of employing the past for the purposes of life and of again introducing into history that which has been done and is gone – did man become man: but with an excess of history man again ceases to exist, and without that envelope of the unhistorical he would never have begun or dared to begin. What deed would man be capable of if he had not first entered into that vaporous region of the unhistorical? Or, to desert this imagery and illustrate by example: imagine a man seized by a vehement passion, for a woman or for a great idea: how different the world has become to him! Looking behind him he seems to himself as though blind, listening around him he hears only a dull, meaningless noise; whatever he does perceive, however, he perceives as he has never perceived before – all is so palpable, close, highly coloured, resounding, as though he apprehended it with all his senses at once. All his valuations are altered and disvalued; there are so many things he is no longer capable of evaluating at all because he can hardly feel them any more: he asks himself why he was for so long the fool of the phrases and opinions of others; he is amazed that his memory revolves unwearyingly in a circle and yet is too weak and weary to take even a single leap out of this circle. It is the condition in which one is the least capable of being just; narrow-minded, ungrateful to the past, blind to dangers, deaf to warnings, one is a little vortex of life in a dead sea of darkness and oblivion: and yet this condition – unhistorical, anti-historical through and through – is the womb not only of the unjust but of every just deed too; and no painter will paint his picture, no general achieve his victory, no people attain its freedom without having first desired and striven for it in an unhistorical condition such as that described. As he who acts is, in Goethe's words, always without a conscience, so is he also always without knowledge; he forgets most things so as to do one thing, he is unjust towards what lies behind him, and he recognizes the rights only of that which is now to come into being and no other rights whatever. Thus he who acts loves his deed infinitely more than it deserves to be loved: and the finest deeds take place in such a superabundance of love that, even if their worth were incalculable in other respects, they must still be unworthy of this love.

If, in a sufficient number of cases, one could scent out and retro-

spectively breathe this unhistorical atmosphere within which every great historical event has taken place, he might, as a percipient being, raise himself to a *suprahistorical* vantage point such as Niebuhr once described as the possible outcome of historical reflection. 'History, grasped clearly and in detail', he says, 'is useful in one way at least: it enables us to recognize how unaware even the greatest and highest spirits of our human race have been of the chance nature of the form assumed by the eyes through which they see and through which they compel everyone to see – compel, that is, because the intensity of their consciousness is exceptionally great. He who has not grasped this quite definitely and in many instances will be subjugated by the appearance of a powerful spirit who brings to a given form the most impassioned commitment.' We may use the word 'suprahistorical' because the viewer from this vantage point could no longer feel any temptation to go on living or to take part in history; he would have recognized the essential condition of all happenings – this blindness and injustice in the soul of him who acts; he would, indeed, be cured for ever of taking history too seriously, for he would have learned from all men and all experiences, whether among Greeks or Turks, from a single hour of the first or of the nineteenth century, to answer his own question as to how or to what end life is lived. If you ask your acquaintances if they would like to relive the past ten or twenty years, you will easily discover which of them is prepared for this suprahistorical standpoint: they will all answer No, to be sure, but they will have different reasons for answering No. Some may perhaps be consoling themselves: 'but the next twenty will be better'; they are those of whom David Hume says mockingly:

> And from the dregs of life hope to receive
> What the first sprightly running could not give.

Let us call them historical men; looking to the past impels them towards the future and fires their courage to go on living and their hope that what they want will still happen, that happiness lies behind the hill they are advancing towards. These historical men believe that the meaning of existence will come more and more to light in the course of its *process*, and they glance behind them only so that, from the process so far, they can learn to understand the present and to desire the future more vehemently; they have no idea that, despite their preoccupation with history, they in fact think and act unhistorically, or that their occupation with history stands in the service, not of pure knowledge, but of life.

But our question can also be answered differently. Again with a No – but with a No for a different reason: with the No of the suprahistorical man, who sees no salvation in the process and for whom, rather, the world is complete and reaches its finality at each and every moment. What could ten more years teach that the past ten were unable to teach!

Whether the sense of this teaching is happiness or resignation or virtue or atonement, suprahistorical men have never been able to agree; but, in opposition to all historical modes of regarding the past, they are unanimous in the proposition: the past and the present are one, that is to say, with all their diversity identical in all that is typical and, as the omnipresence of imperishable types, a motionless structure of a value that cannot alter and a significance that is always the same. Just as the hundreds of different languages correspond to the same typically unchanging needs of man, so that he who understood these needs would be unable to learn anything new from any of these languages, so the suprahistorical thinker beholds the history of nations and of individuals from within, clairvoyantly divining the original meaning of the various hieroglyphics and gradually even coming wearily to avoid the endless stream of new signs: for how should the unending superfluity of events not reduce him to satiety, over-satiety and finally to nausea! So that perhaps the boldest of them is at last ready to say to his heart, with Giacomo Leopardi:

> Nothing lives that is worthy
> Thy agitation, and the earth deserves not a sigh.
> Our being is pain and boredom and the world is dirt – nothing more.
> Be calm.

But let us leave the suprahistorical men to their nausea and their wisdom: today let us rejoice for once in our unwisdom and, as believers in deeds and progress and as honourers of the process, give ourselves a holiday. Our valuation of the historical may be only an occidental prejudice: but let us at least make progress within this prejudice and not stand still! Let us at least learn better how to employ history for the purpose of *life*! Then we will gladly acknowledge that the suprahistorical outlook possesses more wisdom than we do, provided we can only be sure that we possess more life: for then our unwisdom will at any rate have more future than their wisdom will. And in order to leave no doubt as to the meaning of this antithesis of life and wisdom, I shall employ an ancient, tried-and-tested procedure and straightway propound a number of theses.

A historical phenomenon, known clearly and completely and resolved into a phenomenon of knowledge, is, for him who has perceived it, dead: for he has recognized in it the delusion, the injustice, the blind passion, and in general the whole earthly and darkening horizon of this phenomenon, and has thereby also understood its power in history. This power has now lost its hold over him insofar as he is a man of knowledge: but perhaps it has not done so insofar as he is a man involved in life.

History become pure, sovereign science would be for mankind a sort of conclusion of life and a settling of accounts with it. The study of history is something salutary and fruitful for the future only as the attendant of a mighty new current of life, of an evolving culture for example, that is to say only when it is dominated and directed by a higher force and does not itself dominate and direct.

Insofar as it stands in the service of life, history stands in the service of an unhistorical power, and, thus subordinate, it can and should never become a pure science such as, for instance, mathematics is. The question of the degree to which life requires the service of history at all, however, is one of the supreme questions and concerns in regard to the health of a man, a people or a culture. For when it attains a certain degree of excess, life crumbles and degenerates, and through this degeneration history itself finally degenerates too.

2

That life is in need of the services of history, however, must be grasped as firmly as must the proposition, which is to be demonstrated later, that an excess of history is harmful to the living man. History pertains to the living man in three respects: it pertains to him as a being who acts and strives, as a being who preserves and reveres, as a being who suffers and seeks deliverance. This threefold relationship corresponds to three species of history – insofar as it is permissible to distinguish between a *monumental*, an *antiquarian* and a *critical* species of history.

History belongs above all to the man of deeds and power, to him who fights a great fight, who needs models, teachers, comforters and cannot find them among his contemporaries. It belonged thus to Schiller: for our time is so bad, Goethe said, that the poet no longer encounters in the human life that surrounds him a nature he can employ. It is the man of deeds Polybius has in mind when he calls political history the proper preparation for governing a state and the

best teacher who, by recalling to us the misfortunes of others, instructs us in how we may steadfastly endure our own changes of fortune. He who has learned to recognize in this the meaning of history is vexed at the sight of inquisitive tourists or pedantic micrologists clambering about on the pyramids of the great eras of the past; where he finds inspiration to imitate or to do better, he does not wish to encounter the idler who, hungry for distraction or excitement, prowls around as though among pictures in a gallery. Among these feeble and hopeless idlers, among those around him who seem active but are in fact merely agitated and bustling, the man of action avoids despair and disgust by turning his gaze backwards and pausing for breath in his march towards the goal. His goal, however, is happiness, perhaps not his own but often that of a nation or of mankind as a whole; he flees from resignation and needs history as a specific against it. Mostly there is no reward beckoning him on, unless it be fame, that is, the expectation of a place of honour in the temple of history, where he in turn can be a teacher, comforter and admonisher to those who come after him. For the commandment which rules over him is: that which in the past was able to expand the concept 'man' and make it more beautiful must exist everlastingly, so as to be able to accomplish this everlastingly. That the great moments in the struggle of the human individual constitute a chain, that this chain unites mankind across the millennia like a range of human mountain peaks, that the summit of such a long-ago moment shall be for me still living, bright and great – that is the fundamental idea of the faith in humanity which finds expression in the demand for a *monumental* history. But it is precisely this demand that greatness shall be everlasting that sparks off the most fearful of struggles. For everything else that lives cries No. The monumental shall not come into existence – that is the counter-word. Apathetic habit, all that is base and petty, filling every corner of the earth and billowing up around all that is great like a heavy breath of the earth, casts itself across the path that greatness has to tread on its way to immortality and retards, deceives, suffocates and stifles it. This path, however, leads through human brains! Through the brains of timorous and shortlived animals which emerge again and again to the same needs and distresses and fend off destruction only with effort and then only for a short time. For they want first of all but one thing: to live, at any cost. Who would associate *them* with that hard relay-race of monumental history through which alone greatness goes on living! And yet again and again there awaken some who,

gaining strength through reflecting on past greatness, are inspired with the feeling that the life of man is a glorious thing, and even that the fairest fruit of this bitter plant is the knowledge that in earlier times someone passed through this existence infused with pride and strength, someone else sunk in profound thoughtfulness, a third exhibiting mercy and helpfulness – all of them, however, leaving behind them a single teaching: that he lives best who has no respect for existence. If the common man takes this little span of time with such gloomy earnestness and clings to it so desperately, those few we have just spoken of have known, on their way to immortality and to monumental history, how to regard it with Olympian laughter or at least with sublime mockery; often they descended to their grave with an ironic smile – for what was there left of them to bury! Only the dross, refuse, vanity, animality that had always weighed them down and that was now consigned to oblivion after having for long been the object of their contempt. But one thing will live, the monogram of their most essential being, a work, an act, a piece of rare enlightenment, a creation: it will live because posterity cannot do without it. In this transfigured form, fame is something more than the tastiest morsel of our egoism, as Schopenhauer called it: it is the belief in the solidarity and continuity of the greatness of all ages and a protest against the passing away of generations and the transitoriness of things.

Of what use, then, is the monumentalistic conception of the past, engagement with the classic and rare of earlier times, to the man of the present? He learns from it that the greatness that once existed was in any event once *possible* and may thus be possible again; he goes his way with more cheerful step, for the doubt which assailed him in weaker moments, whether he was not perhaps desiring the impossible, has now been banished. Supposing someone believed that it would require no more than a hundred men educated and actively working in a new spirit to do away with the bogus form of culture which has just now become the fashion in Germany, how greatly it would strengthen him to realize that the culture of the Renaissance was raised on the shoulders of just such a band of a hundred men.

And yet – to learn something new straightaway from this example – how inexact, fluid and provisional that comparison would be! How much of the past would have to be overlooked if it was to produce that mighty effect, how violently what is individual in it would have to be forced into a universal mould and all its sharp corners and hard outlines broken up in the interest of conformity! At bottom,

indeed, that which was once possible could present itself as a possibility for a second time only if the Pythagoreans were right in believing that when the constellation of the heavenly bodies is repeated the same things, down to the smallest event, must also be repeated on earth: so that whenever the stars stand in a certain relation to one another a Stoic again joins with an Epicurean to murder Caesar, and when they stand in another relation Columbus will again discover America. Only if, when the fifth act of the earth's drama ended, the whole play every time began again from the beginning, if it was certain that the same complex of motives, the same *deus ex machina*, the same catastrophe were repeated at definite intervals, could the man of power venture to desire monumental history in full icon-like *veracity*, that is to say with every individual peculiarity depicted in precise detail: but that will no doubt happen only when the astronomers have again become astrologers. Until that time, monumental history will have no use for that absolute veracity: it will always have to deal in approximations and generalities, in making what is dissimilar look similar; it will always have to diminish the differences of motives and instigations so as to exhibit the *effectus* monumentally, that is to say as something exemplary and worthy of imitation, at the expense of the *causae*: so that, since it as far as possible ignores causes, one might with only slight exaggeration call it a collection of 'effects in themselves', of events which will produce an effect upon all future ages. That which is celebrated at popular festivals, at religious or military anniversaries, is really such an 'effect in itself': it is this which will not let the ambitious sleep, which the brave wear over their hearts like an amulet, but it is not the truly historical *connexus* of cause and effect – which, fully understood, would only demonstrate that the dice-game of chance and the future could never again produce anything exactly similar to what it produced in the past.

As long as the soul of historiography lies in the great *stimuli* that a man of power derives from it, as long as the past has to be described as worthy of imitation, as imitable and possible for a second time, it of course incurs the danger of becoming somewhat distorted, beautified and coming close to free poetic invention; there have been ages, indeed, which were quite incapable of distinguishing between a monumentalized past and a mythical fiction, because precisely the same stimuli can be derived from the one world as from the other. If, therefore, the monumental mode of regarding history *rules* over the other modes – I mean over the antiquarian and critical

– the past itself suffers *harm*: whole segments of it are forgotten, despised, and flow away in an uninterrupted colourless flood, and only individual embellished facts rise out of it like islands: the few personalities who are visible at all have something strange and unnatural about them, like the golden hip which the pupils of Pythagoras supposed they saw on their master. Monumental history deceives by analogies: with seductive similarities it inspires the courageous to foolhardiness and the inspired to fanaticism; and when we go on to think of this kind of history in the hands and heads of gifted egoists and visionary scoundrels, then we see empires destroyed, princes murdered, wars and revolutions launched and the number of historical 'effects in themselves', that is to say, effects without sufficient cause, again augmented. So much as a reminder of the harm that monumental history can do among men of power and achievement, whether they be good men or evil: what, however, is it likely to do when the impotent and indolent take possession of it and employ it!

Let us take the simplest and most frequent example. Imagine the inartistic natures, and those only weakly endowed, armoured and armed by a monumentalist history of the artists: against whom will they now turn their weapons? Against their arch-enemies, the strong artistic spirits, that is to say against those who alone are capable of learning from that history in a true, that is to say life-enhancing sense, and of transforming what they have learned into a more elevated practice. Their path will be barred, their air darkened, if a half-understood monument to some great era of the past is erected as an idol and zealously danced around, as though to say: 'Behold, this is true art: pay no heed to those who are evolving and want something new!' This dancing mob appears to possess even the privilege of determining what is 'good taste': for the creative man has always been at a disadvantage compared with those who have only looked on and taken no part themselves; just as the public house politician has at all times been cleverer, more judicious and more prudent than the statesman who actually rules. But if one goes so far as to employ the popular referendum and the numerical majority in the domain of art, and as it were compels the artist to defend himself before the forum of the aesthetically inactive, then you can take your oath on it in advance that he will be condemned: not in spite of the fact that his judges have solemnly proclaimed the canon of monumental art (that is to say, the art which, according to the given definition, has at all times 'produced an effect'), but precisely *because* they

have: while any art which, because contemporary, is not yet monumental, seems to them unnecessary, unattractive and lacking in the authority conferred by history. On the other hand, their instincts tell them that art can be slain by art: the monumental is never to be repeated, and to make sure it is not they invoke the authority which the monumental derives from the past. They are connoisseurs of art because they would like to do away with art altogether; they pose as physicians, while their basic intent is to mix poisons; they develop their taste and tongue as they do so as to employ this spoiled taste as an explanation of why they so resolutely reject all the nourishing artistic food that is offered them. For they do not desire to see new greatness emerge: their means of preventing it is to say 'Behold, greatness already exists!' In reality, they are as little concerned about this greatness that already exists as they are about that which is emerging: their lives are evidence of this. Monumental history is the masquerade costume in which their hatred of the great and powerful of their own age is disguised as satiated admiration for the great and powerful of past ages, and muffled in which they invert the real meaning of that mode of regarding history into its opposite; whether they are aware of it or not, they act as though their motto were: let the dead bury the living.

Each of the three species of history which exist belongs to a certain soil and a certain climate and only to that: in any other it grows into a devastating weed. If the man who wants to do something great has need of the past at all, he appropriates it by means of monumental history; he, on the other hand, who likes to persist in the familiar and the revered of old, tends the past as an antiquarian historian; and only he who is oppressed by a present need, and who wants to throw off this burden at any cost, has need of critical history, that is to say a history that judges and condemns. Much mischief is caused through the thoughtless transplantation of these plants: the critic without need, the antiquary without piety, the man who recognizes greatness but cannot himself do great things, are such plants, estranged from their mother soil and degenerated into weeds.

3

History thus belongs in the second place to him who preserves and reveres – to him who looks back to whence he has come, to where he came into being, with love and loyalty; with this piety he as it were gives thanks for his existence. By tending with care that which has

existed from of old, he wants to preserve for those who shall come into existence after him the conditions under which he himself came into existence – and thus he serves life. The possession of ancestral goods changes its meaning in such a soul: *they* rather possess *it*. The trivial, circumscribed, decaying and obsolete acquire their own dignity and inviolability through the fact that the preserving and revering soul of the antiquarian man has emigrated into them and there made its home. The history of his city becomes for him the history of himself; he reads its walls, its towered gate, its rules and regulations, its holidays, like an illuminated diary of his youth and in all this he finds again himself, his force, his industry, his joy, his judgment, his folly and vices. Here we lived, he says to himself, for here we are living; and here we shall live, for we are tough and not to be ruined overnight. Thus with the aid of this 'we' he looks beyond his own individual transitory existence and feels himself to be the spirit of his house, his race, his city. Sometimes he even greets the soul of his nation across the long dark centuries of confusion as his own soul; an ability to feel his way back and sense how things were, to detect traces almost extinguished, to read the past quickly and correctly no matter how intricate its palimpsest may be – these are his talents and virtues. Endowed with these talents and virtues Goethe stood before Erwin von Steinbach's monumental work; in the storm of his feelings the historical clouds which veiled the time between them were rent apart: it was his recognition, at first sight, of the German work of art 'exerting its power through a strong, rough German soul'. It was the same tendency which directed the Italians of the Renaissance and reawoke in their poets the genius of ancient Italy to a 'wonderful new resounding of the primeval strings', as Jakob Burckhardt puts it. But this antiquarian sense of veneration of the past is of the greatest value when it spreads a simple feeling of pleasure and contentment over the modest, rude, even wretched conditions in which a man or a nation lives; Niebuhr, for example, admits with honourable candour that on moor and heathland, among free peasants who possess a history, he can live contented and never feel the want of art. How could history serve life better than when it makes the less favoured generations and peoples contented with their own homeland and its customs, and restrains them from roving abroad in search of something they think more worth having and engaging in battles for it? Sometimes this clinging to one's own environment and companions, one's own toilsome customs, one's own bare mountainside, looks like obstinacy and ignorance – yet it is

a very salutary ignorance and one most calculated to further the interests of the community: a fact of which anyone must be aware who knows the dreadful consequences of the desire for expeditions and adventures, especially when it seizes whole hordes of nations, and who has seen from close up the condition a nation gets into when it has ceased to be faithful to its own origins and is given over to a restless, cosmopolitan hunting after new and ever newer things. The feeling antithetical to this, the contentment of the tree in its roots, the happiness of knowing that one is not wholly accidental and arbitrary but grown out of a past as its heir, flower and fruit, and that one's existence is thus excused and, indeed, justified – it is this which is today usually designated as the real sense of history.

This notwithstanding, such a condition is certainly not one in which a man would be most capable of resolving the past into pure knowledge; so that here too, as in the case of monumental history, we perceive that, as long as the study of history serves life and is directed by the vital drives, the past itself suffers. To employ a somewhat free metaphor: the tree is aware of its roots to a greater degree than it is able to see them; but this awareness judges how big they are from the size and strength of its visible branches. If, however, the tree is in error as to this, how greatly it will be in error regarding all the rest of the forest around it! – for it knows of the forest only that in it which obstructs or favours it and nothing beside. The antiquarian sense of a man, a community, a whole people, always possesses an extremely restricted field of vision; most of what exists it does not perceive at all, and the little it does see it sees much too close up and isolated; it cannot relate what it sees to anything else and it therefore accords everything it sees equal importance and therefore to each individual thing too great importance. There is a lack of that discrimination of value and that sense of proportion which would distinguish between the things of the past in a way that would do true justice to them; their measure and proportion is always that accorded them by the backward glance of the antiquarian nation or individual.

This always produces one very imminent danger: everything old and past that enters one's field of vision at all is in the end blandly taken to be equally worthy of reverence, while everything that does not approach this antiquity with reverence, that is to say everything new and evolving, is rejected and persecuted. Thus even the Greeks tolerated the hieratic style in their plastic arts beside the free and great; later, indeed, they did not merely tolerate the elevated nose

and the frosty smile but even made a cult of it. When the senses of a people harden in this fashion, when the study of history serves the life of the past in such a way that it undermines continuing and especially higher life, when the historical sense no longer conserves life but mummifies it, then the tree gradually dies unnaturally from the top downwards to the roots – and in the end the roots themselves usually perish too. Antiquarian history itself degenerates from the moment it is no longer animated and inspired by the fresh life of the present. Its piety withers away, the habit of scholarliness continues without it and rotates in egoistic self-satisfaction around its own axis. Then there appears the repulsive spectacle of a blind rage for collecting, a restless raking together of everything that has ever existed. Man is encased in the stench of must and mould; through the antiquarian approach he succeeds in reducing even a more creative disposition, a nobler desire, to an insatiable thirst for novelty, or rather for antiquity and for all and everything; often he sinks so low that in the end he is content to gobble down any food whatever, even the dust of bibliographical minutiae.

But even when this degeneration does not take place, when antiquarian history does not lose the foundation in which alone it must be rooted if it is to benefit life, sufficient dangers remain should it grow too mighty and overpower the other modes of regarding the past. For it knows only how to *preserve* life, not how to engender it; it always undervalues that which is becoming because it has no instinct for divining it – as monumental history, for example, has. Thus it hinders any firm resolve to attempt something new, thus it paralyses the man of action who, as one who acts, will and must offend some piety or other. The fact that something has grown old now gives rise to the demand that it be made immortal; for when one considers all that such an antiquity – an ancient custom of the ancestors, a religious belief, an inherited political privilege – has experienced during the course of its existence, how great a sum of piety and reverence on the part of individuals and generations, then it must seem arrogant or even wicked to replace such an antiquity with a novelty and to set against such a numerical accumulation of acts of piety and reverence the single unit of that which is evolving and has just arrived.

Here it becomes clear how necessary it is to mankind to have, beside the monumental and antiquarian modes of regarding the past, a *third* mode, the *critical*: and this, too, in the service of life. If he is to live, man must possess and from time to time employ the strength to break up and dissolve a part of the past: he does this by

bringing it before the tribunal, scrupulously examining it and finally condemning it; every past, however, is worthy to be condemned – for that is the nature of human things: human violence and weakness have always played a mighty role in them. It is not justice which here sits in judgment; it is even less mercy which pronounces the verdict: it is life alone, that dark, driving power that insatiably thirsts for itself. Its sentence is always unmerciful, always unjust, because it has never proceeded out of a pure well of knowledge; but in most cases the sentence would be the same even if it were pronounced by justice itself. 'For all that exists is *worthy* of perishing. So it would be better if nothing existed.' It requires a great deal of strength to be able to live and to forget the extent to which to live and to be unjust is one and the same thing. Luther himself once opined that the world existed only through a piece of forgetful negligence on God's part: for if God had foreseen 'heavy artillery' he would not have created the world. Sometimes, however, this same life that requires forgetting demands a temporary suspension of this forgetfulness; it wants to be clear as to how unjust the existence of anything – a privilege, a caste, a dynasty, for example – is, and how greatly this thing deserves to perish. Then its past is regarded critically, then one takes the knife to its roots, then one cruelly tramples over every kind of piety. It is always a dangerous process, especially so for life itself: and men and ages which serve life by judging and destroying a past are always dangerous and endangered men and ages. For since we are the outcome of earlier generations, we are also the outcome of their aberrations, passions and errors, and indeed of their crimes; it is not possible wholly to free oneself from this chain. If we condemn these aberrations and regard ourselves as free of them, this does not alter the fact that we originate in them. The best we can do is to confront our inherited and hereditary nature with our knowledge, and through a new, stern discipline combat our inborn heritage and inplant in ourselves a new habit, a new instinct, a second nature, so that our first nature withers away. It is an attempt to give oneself, as it were *a posteriori*, a past in which one would like to originate in opposition to that in which one did originate: – always a dangerous attempt because it is so hard to know the limit to denial of the past and because second natures are usually weaker than first. What happens all too often is that we know the good but do not do it, because we also know the better but cannot do it. But here and there a victory is nonetheless achieved, and for the combatants, for those who

employ critical history for the sake of life, there is even a noteworthy consolation: that of knowing that this first nature was once a second nature and that every victorious second nature will become a first.

4

These are the services history is capable of performing for life; every man and every nation requires, in accordance with its goals, energies and needs, a certain kind of knowledge of the past, now in the form of monumental, now of antiquarian, now of critical history: but it does not require it as a host of pure thinkers who only look on at life, of knowledge-thirsty individuals whom knowledge alone will satisfy and to whom the accumulation of knowledge is itself the goal, but always and only for the ends of life and thus also under the domination and supreme direction of these ends. That this is the natural relationship of an age, a culture, a nation with its history – evoked by hunger, regulated by the extent of its need, held in bounds by its inherent plastic powers – that knowledge of the past has at all times been desired only in the service of the future and the present and not for the weakening of the present or for depriving a vigorous future of its roots: all this is simple, as the truth is simple, and will at once be obvious even to him who has not had it demonstrated by historical proof.

And now let us quickly take a look at our own time! We are startled, we shy away: where has all the clarity, all the naturalness and purity of this relationship between life and history gone? in what restless and exaggerated confusion does this problem now swell before our eyes! Does the fault lie with us, who observe it? Or has the constellation of life and history really altered through the interposition of a mighty, hostile star between them? Let others show that we have seen falsely: for our part we shall say what we think we see. And what we see is certainly a star, a gleaming and glorious star interposing itself, the constellation really has been altered – *by science, by the demand that history should be a science*. Now the demands of life alone no longer reign and exercise constraint on knowledge of the past: now all the frontiers have been torn down and all that has ever been rushes upon mankind. All perspectives have been shifted back to the beginning of all becoming, back into infinity. Such an immense spectacle as the science of universal becoming, history, now displays

has never before been seen by any generation; though it displays it, to be sure, with the perilous daring of its motto: *fiat veritas, pereat vita.**

Let us now picture the spiritual occurrence introduced into the soul of modern man by that which we have just described. Historical knowledge streams in unceasingly from inexhaustible wells, the strange and incoherent forces its way forward, memory opens all its gates and yet is not open wide enough, nature travails in an effort to receive, arrange and honour these strange guests, but they themselves are in conflict with one another and it seems necessary to constrain and control them if one is not oneself to perish in their conflict. Habituation to such a disorderly, stormly and conflict-ridden household gradually becomes a second nature, though this second nature is beyond question much weaker, much more restless, and thoroughly less sound than the first. In the end, modern man drags around with him a huge quantity of indigestible stones of knowledge, which then, as in the fairy tale, can sometimes be heard rumbling about inside him. And in this rumbling there is betrayed the most characteristic quality of modern man: the remarkable antithesis between an interior which fails to correspond to any exterior and an exterior which fails to correspond to any interior – an antithesis unknown to the peoples of earlier times. Knowledge, consumed for the greater part without hunger for it and even counter to one's needs, now no longer acts as an agent for transforming the outside world but remains concealed within a chaotic inner world which modern man describes with a curious pride as his uniquely characteristic inwardness. It is then said that one possesses content and only form is lacking; but such an antithesis is quite improper when applied to living things. This precisely is why our modern culture is not a living thing: it is incomprehensible without recourse to that antithesis; it is not a real culture at all but only a kind of knowledge of culture; it has an idea of and feeling for culture but no true cultural achievement emerges from them. What actually inspires it and then appears as a visible act, on the other hand, often signifies not much more than an indifferent convention, a pitiful imitation or even a crude caricature. Cultural sensibility then lies quietly within, like a snake that has swallowed rabbits whole and now lies in the sun and avoids all unnecessary movement. The inner process is now the thing itself, is what actually constitutes 'culture'.

**fiat veritas, pereat vita*: let truth prevail though life perish

Anyone observing this has only one wish, that such a culture should not perish of indigestion. Imagine, for example, a Greek observing such a culture: he would perceive that for modern man 'educated' and 'historically educated' seem so to belong together as to mean one and the same thing and to differ only verbally. If he then said that one can be very educated and yet at the same time altogether uneducated historically, modern men would think they had failed to hear him aright and would shake their heads. That celebrated little nation of a not so distant past – I mean these same Greeks – during the period of their greatest strength kept a tenacious hold on their unhistorical sense; if a present-day man were magically transported back to that world he would probably consider the Greeks very 'uncultured' – whereby, to be sure, the secret of modern culture, so scrupulously hidden, would be exposed to public ridicule: for we moderns have nothing whatever of our own; only by replenishing and cramming ourselves with the ages, customs, arts, philosophies, religions, discoveries of others do we become anything worthy of notice, that is to say, walking encyclopaedias, which is what an ancient Greek transported into our own time would perhaps take us for. With encyclopaedias, however, all the value lies in what is contained within, in the content, not in what stands without, the binding and cover; so it is that the whole of modern culture is essentially inward: on the outside the bookbinder has printed some such thing as 'Handbook of inward culture for outward barbarians'. This antithesis of inner and outer, indeed, makes the exterior even more barbaric than it would be if a rude nation were only to develop out of itself in accordance with its own uncouth needs. For what means are available to nature for overcoming that which presses upon it in too great abundance? One alone: to embrace it as lightly as possible so as quickly to expel it again and have done with it. From this comes a habit of no longer taking real things seriously, from this arises the 'weak personality' by virtue of which the real and existent makes only a slight impression; one becomes ever more negligent of one's outer appearance and, provided the memory is continually stimulated by a stream of new things worth knowing which can be stored tidily away in its coffers, one finally widens the dubious gulf between content and form to the point of complete insensibility to barbarism. The culture of a people as the antithesis to this barbarism was once, and as I think with a certain justice, defined as unity of artistic style in all the expressions of the life of a people; this definition should not be misunderstood in the sense of implying an

antithesis between barbarism and *fine* style; what is meant is that a people to whom one attributes a culture has to be in all reality a single living unity and not fall wretchedly apart into inner and outer, content and form. He who wants to strive for and promote the culture of a people should strive for and promote this higher unity and join in the destruction of modern bogus cultivatedness for the sake of a true culture; he should venture to reflect how the health of a people undermined by the study of history may be again restored, how it may rediscover its instincts and therewith its honesty.

I may as well speak directly of ourselves, we Germans of the present day who are more afflicted than other nations by that weakness of personality and that contradiction between form and content. Form generally counts with us as a convention, as a vestment and disguise, and it is therefore, if not exactly hated, at any rate not loved; it would be even more correct to say that we have an extraordinary fear of the word 'convention' and, no doubt, also of the thing. It was this fear which led the German to desert the school of France: he wanted to become more natural and thereby more German. But this 'thereby' seems to have been a miscalculation: escaped from the school of convention, he then let himself go in whatever manner his fancy happened to suggest to him, and at bottom did no more than imitate in a slovenly and half-forgetful way what he had formerly imitated with scrupulous care and often with success. So it is that, compared with past ages, we dwell even today in a carelessly inaccurate copy of French convention: a fact to which all our comings and goings, conversations, clothing and habitations bear witness. We thought we were retreating into naturalness, but what we were really doing was letting ourselves go and electing for ease and comfort and the smallest possible degree of self-discipline. Take a stroll through a German city – compared with the distinct national qualities displayed in foreign cities, all the conventions here are negative ones, everything is colourless, worn out, badly copied, negligent, everyone does as he likes but what he likes is never forceful and well considered but follows the rules laid down first by universal haste, then by the universal rage for ease and comfort. A garment which costs no intelligence to design and no time to put on, that is to say a garment borrowed from abroad and imitated in the most easygoing way possible, at once counts with the Germans as a contribution to German national dress. The sense of form is rejected without the slightest misgiving – for we possess the *sense of the content*: for the

Germans are, after all, celebrated for their profound inwardness.

But this inwardness also carries with it a celebrated danger: the content itself, of which it is assumed that it cannot be seen from without, may occasionally evaporate; from without, however, neither its former presence nor its disappearance will be apparent at all. But however far from this danger we may imagine the German people to be, the foreigner will still be to some extent justified in maintaining that our interior is too feeble and disorganized to produce an outward effect and endow itself with a form. The interior of the Germans can be receptive to an exceptional degree: serious, powerful, profound, and perhaps even richer than that of other nations; but as a whole it remains weak because all these beautiful threads are not wound together into a powerful knot: so that the visible act is not the act and self-revelation of the totality of this interior but only a feeble or crude attempt on the part of one or other of these threads to pose as being the whole. That is why the German cannot be judged by his actions and why as an individual he is still completely hidden even after he has acted. As is well known, he has to be assessed according to his thoughts and feelings, and these he nowadays expresses in his books. If only it were not precisely these books which, now more than ever before, lead us to doubt whether that celebrated inwardness really does still reside in its inaccessible little temple; it is a dreadful thought that one day they might disappear and all that would be left to signalize the German would be his arrogantly clumsy and meekly slovenly exterior: almost as dreadful as if that hidden inwardness were sitting in there falsified and painted over and had become an actor if not something worse. This, at any rate, is what Grillparzer, as an independent observer, seems to have gathered from his experience in the theatre. 'We feel in abstractions', he says, 'we hardly know any longer how feeling really expresses itself with our contemporaries; we show them performing actions such as they no longer perform nowadays. Shakespeare has ruined all of us moderns.'

This is a single case and perhaps it has been generalized too hastily: but how fearful it would be if such a generalization were justified, if a host of individual cases should crowd in upon the observer; how desolating it would be to have to say: we Germans feel in abstractions, we have all been ruined by history – a proposition which would destroy at its roots all hope of a future national culture: for

any such hope grows out of the belief in the genuineness and immediacy of German feeling, out of the belief in a sound and whole inwardness. What is there left to hope for or believe in if the source of hope and belief is muddied, if inwardness has learned to make leaps, to dance, to paint itself, to express itself in abstractions and with calculation and gradually to lose itself! And how should the great productive spirit continue to endure among a people no longer secure in a unified inwardness and which falls asunder into the cultivated with a miseducated and misled inwardness on the one hand and the uncultivated with an inaccessible inwardness on the other! How should that spirit endure if unity of feeling among the people has been lost, and if, moreover, it knows that this feeling is falsified and retouched precisely among that part of the people which calls itself the cultured part and lays claim to possession of the national artistic conscience? Even if here and there an individual's taste and judgment has grown more subtle and sublimated, that is no advantage to *him*: he is racked by the knowledge that he has to speak as it were to a sect and is no longer needed in the body of his nation. Perhaps he now prefers to bury his treasure rather than suffer the disgust of being presumptuously patronized by a sect while his heart is full of pity for all. The instinct of the nation no longer comes out to meet him; it is useless for him to stretch out his arms towards them in longing. What is there now left to this spirit but to turn his inspired hatred against that constraint, against the barriers erected in the so-called culture of his nation, so as to condemn what to him, as a living being and one productive of life, is destructive and degrading: thus he exchanges a profound insight into his destiny for the divine joys of creation and construction, and ends as a solitary man of knowledge and satiated sage. It is the most painful of spectacles: he who beholds it will know a sacred compulsion: here, he says to himself, I must render aid, that higher unity in the nature and soul of a people must again be created, that breach between inner and outer must again vanish under the hammer-blows of necessity. But what weapons can he employ? What does he have but, again, his profound insight: propagating it and sowing it with full hands he hopes to implant a need: and out of a vigorous need there will one day arise a vigorous deed. And so as to leave no doubt of the source of my example of that need, that necessity, that perception, let me say expressly that it is for *German unity* in that highest sense that we strive, and strive more ardently than we do for political reunification, *the unity of German spirit and life after the abolition of the antithesis of form and content, of inwardness and convention.* –

5

The oversaturation of an age with history seems to me to be hostile and dangerous to life in five respects: such an excess creates that contrast between inner and outer which we have just discussed, and thereby weakens the personality; it leads an age to imagine that it possesses the rarest of virtues, justice, to a greater degree than any other age; it disrupts the instincts of a people, and hinders the individual no less than the whole in the attainment of maturity; it implants the belief, harmful at any time, in the old age of mankind, the belief that one is a latecomer and epigone; it leads an age into a dangerous mood of irony in regard to itself and subsequently into the even more dangerous mood of cynicism: in this mood, however, it develops more and more a prudent practical egoism through which the forces of life are paralyzed and at last destroyed.

And now back to our first proposition: modern man suffers from a weakened personality. As the Roman of the imperial era became un-Roman in relation to the world which stood at his service, as he lost himself in the flood of foreigners which came streaming in and degenerated in the midst of the cosmopolitan carnival of gods, arts and customs, so the same must happen to modern man who allows his artists in history to go on preparing a world exhibition for him; he has become a strolling spectator and has arrived at a condition in which even great wars and revolutions are able to influence him for hardly more than a moment. The war is not even over before it is transformed into a hundred thousand printed pages and set before the tired palates of the history-hungry as the latest delicacy. It seems that the instrument is almost incapable of producing a strong and full note, no matter how vigorously it is played: its tones at once die away and in a moment have faded to a tender historical echo. Expressed morally: you are no longer capable of holding on to the sublime, your deeds are shortlived explosions, not rolling thunder. Though the greatest and most miraculous event should occur – it must nonetheless descend, silent and unsung, into Hades. For art flees away if you immediately conceal your deeds under the awning of history. He who wants to understand, grasp and assess in a moment that before which he ought to stand long in awe as before an incomprehensible sublimity may be called reasonable, but only in the sense in which Schiller speaks of the rationality of the reasonable man: there are things he does not see which even a child sees, there are things he does not hear which even a child hears, and these

things are precisely the most important things: because he does not understand these things, his understanding is more childish than the child and more simple than simplicity – and this in spite of the many cunning folds of his parchment scroll and the virtuosity of his fingers in unravelling the entangled. The reason is that he has lost and destroyed his instincts and, having lost his trust in the 'divine animal', he can no longer let go the reins when his reason falters and his path leads him through deserts. Thus the individual grows fainthearted and unsure and dares no longer believe in himself: he sinks into his own interior depths, which here means into the accumulated lumber of what he has learned but which has no outward effect, of instruction which does not become life. If one watches him from outside, one sees how the expulsion of the instincts by history has transformed man almost into mere *abstractis* and shadows: no one dares to appear as he is, but masks himself as a cultivated man, as a scholar, as a poet, as a politician. If, believing all this to be in earnest and not a mere puppet-play – for they all affect earnestness – one takes hold of these masks, one suddenly has nothing but rags and tatters in one's hands. That is why one should no longer let oneself be deceived, that is why one should order them: 'Off with your coats or be what you seem!' It can no longer be borne that everyone of a noble seriousness should become a Don Quixote, since he has better things to do than to buffet about with such false realities. But he must nonetheless keep a sharp lookout, whenever he encounters a mask cry his 'Halt! Who goes there?' and tear the mask from its face. Strange! One would think that history would encourage men to be *honest* – even if only honest fools; and hitherto this has indeed been its effect, only now it is no longer! Historical education and the identical bourgeois coat rule at the same time. While the 'free personality' has never before been commended so volubly, there are no personalities to be seen, let alone free personalities – nothing but anxiously muffled up identical people. Individuality has withdrawn within: from without it has become invisible; a fact which leads one to ask whether indeed there could be causes without effects. Or is a race of eunuchs needed to watch over the great historical world-harem? Pure objectivity would certainly characterize such a race. For it almost seems that the task is to stand guard over history to see that nothing comes out of it except more history, and certainly no real events! – to take care that history does not make any personality 'free', that is to say truthful towards itself, truthful towards others, in both word and deed. It is only through

such truthfulness that the distress, the inner misery, of modern man will come to light, and that, in place of that anxious concealment through convention and masquerade, art and religion, true ancillaries, will be able to combine to implant a culture which corresponds to real needs and does not, as present-day universal education teaches it to do, deceive itself as to these needs and thereby become a walking lie.

In an age which suffers from this universal education, to what an unnatural, artificial and in any case unworthy state must the most truthful of all sciences, the honest naked goddess philosophy, be reduced! In such a world of compelled external uniformity it must remain the learned monologue of the solitary walker, the individual's chance capture, the hidden secret of the chamber, or the harmless chatter of academic old men and children. No one dares venture to fulfil the philosophical law in himself, no one lives philosophically with that simple loyalty that constrained a man of antiquity to bear himself as a Stoic wherever he was, whatever he did, once he had affirmed his loyalty to the Stoa. All modern philosophizing is political and official, limited by governments, churches, academies, customs and the cowardice of men to the appearance of scholarship; it sighs 'if only' or knows 'there once was' and does nothing else. Within a historical culture philosophy possesses no rights if it wants to be more than a self-restrained knowing which leads to no action; if modern man had any courage or resolution at all, if he were not merely a subjective creature even in his enmities, he would banish philosophy; as it is, he contents himself with modestly concealing its nudity. One may think, write, print, speak, teach philosophy – to that point more or less everything is permitted; only in the realm of action, of so-called life, is it otherwise: there only one thing is ever permitted and everything else simply impossible: thus will historical culture have it. Are there still human beings, one then asks oneself, or perhaps only thinking-, writing- and speaking-machines?

Goethe once said of Shakespeare: 'No one despised outward costume more than he; he knew very well the inner human costume, and here all are alike. They say he hit off the Romans admirably; but I don't find it so, they are all nothing but flesh-and-blood Englishmen, but they are certainly human beings, human from head to foot, and the Roman toga sits on them perfectly well.' Now I ask whether it would be possible to represent our contemporary men of letters, popular figures, officials or politicians as Romans; it simply would not work, because they are not human beings but only

flesh-and-blood compendia and as it were abstractions made concrete. If they possess a character of their own it is buried so deep it cannot get out into the light of day: if they are human beings they are so only to him 'who explores the depths'. To anyone else they are something different, not men, not gods, not animals, but creations of historical culture, wholly structure, image, form without demonstrable content and, unhappily, ill-designed form and, what is more, uniform. And so let my proposition be understood and pondered: *history can be borne only by strong personalities, weak ones are utterly extinguished by it*. The reason is that history confuses the feelings and sensibility when these are not strong enough to assess the past by themselves. He who no longer dares to trust himself but involuntarily asks of history 'How ought I to feel about this?' finds that his timidity gradually turns him into an actor and that he is playing a role, usually indeed many roles and therefore playing them badly and superficially. Gradually all congruity between the man and his historical domain is lost; we behold pert little fellows associating with the Romans as though they were their equals: and they root and burrow in the remains of the Greek poets as though these too were *corpora* for their dissection and were as *vilia* as their own literary *corpora* may be.* Suppose one of them is engaged with Democritus, I always feel like asking: why not Heraclitus? Or Philo? Or Bacon? Or Descartes? – or anyone else. And then: why does it have to be a philosopher? Why not a poet or an orator? And: why a Greek at all, why not an Englishman or a Turk? Is the past not big enough for you to be able to find nothing except things in comparison with which you cut so ludicrous a figure? But, as I have said, this is a race of eunuchs, and to a eunuch one woman is like another, simply a woman, woman in herself, the eternally unapproachable – and it is thus a matter of indifference what they do so long as history itself is kept nice and 'objective', bearing in mind that those who want to keep it so are for ever incapable of making history themselves. And since the eternally womanly will never draw you upward, you draw it down to you and, being neuters, take history too for a neuter.† But so that it shall not be thought that I am seriously comparing history

**vilia corpora*: vile bodies

†Alludes to the closing lines of Goethe's *Faust II*: 'Das Ewig-Weibliche/Zieht uns hinan'. Nietzsche often alludes to the phrase, always in an ironic-humorous tone: he failed, I think, to discover any meaning in it.

with the eternally womanly, I should like to make it clear that, on the contrary, I regard it rather as the eternally manly: though, to be sure, for those who are 'historically educated' through and through it must be a matter of some indifference whether it is the one or the other: for they themselves are neither man nor woman, nor even hermaphrodite, but always and only neuters or, to speak more cultivatedly, the eternally objective.

If the personality is emptied in the manner described and has become eternally subjectless or, as it is usually put, objective, nothing can affect it any longer; good and right things may be done, as deeds, poetry, music: the hollowed-out cultivated man at once looks beyond the work and asks about the history of its author. If he has already several other works behind him, he is at once obliged to have explained to him the previous and possible future progress of his development, he is at once compared with other artists, criticized as to his choice of subject and his treatment of it, dissected, carefully put together again, and in general admonished and set on the right path. The most astonishing thing may come to pass – the host of the historically neutral is always there ready to supervise the author of it even while he is still far off. The echo is heard immediately: but always as a 'critique', though the moment before the critic did not so much as dream of the possibility of what has been done. The work never produces an effect but only another 'critique'; and the critique itself produces no effect either, but again only a further critique. There thus arises a general agreement to regard the acquisition of many critiques as a sign of success, of few or none as a sign of failure. At bottom, however, even given this kind of 'effect' everything remains as it was: people have some new thing to chatter about for a while, and then something newer still, and in the meantime go on doing what they have always done. The historical culture of our critics will no longer permit any effect at all in the proper sense, that is an effect on life and action: their blotting-paper at once goes down even on the blackest writing, and across the most graceful design they smear their thick brush-strokes which are supposed to be regarded as corrections: and once again that is the end of that. But their critical pens never cease to flow, for they have lost control of them and instead of directing them are directed by them. It is precisely in this immoderation of its critical outpourings, in its lack of self-control, in that which the Romans call *impotentia*, that the modern personality betrays its weakness.

6

But let us leave this weakness behind; and let us turn to a much celebrated strength of modern man with the question, a painful one to be sure, as to whether on account of his well-known historical 'objectivity' he has a right to call himself strong, that is to say *just*, and just in a higher degree than men of other ages. Is it true that this objectivity originates in an enhanced need and demand for justice? Or is it an effect of quite different causes and only appears to originate in a desire for justice? Does it perhaps seduce one to a harmful, because all too flattering, prejudice as to the virtues of modern man? – Socrates considered that to delude oneself that one possesses a virtue one does not possess is an illness bordering on madness: and such a delusion is certainly more dangerous than the opposite illusion of being the victim of a fault or a vice. For in the latter case it is at any rate possible one will become better; the former delusion, however, makes a man or an age daily worse – which in the present instance means more unjust.

In truth, no one has a greater claim to our veneration than he who possesses the drive to and strength for justice. For the highest and rarest virtues are united and concealed in justice as in an unfathomable ocean that receives streams and rivers from all sides and takes them into itself. The hand of the just man who is empowered to judge no longer trembles when it holds the scales; he sets weight upon weight with inexorable disregard of himself, his eye is unclouded as it sees the scales rise and fall, and his voice is neither harsh nor tearful when he pronounces the verdict. If he were a cold demon of knowledge, he would spread about him the icy atmosphere of a dreadful suprahuman majesty which we would have to fear, not revere: but that he is a human being and yet nonetheless tries to ascend from indulgent doubt to stern certainty, from tolerant mildness to the imperative 'you must', from the rare virtue of magnanimity to the rarest of all virtues, justice; that he resembles that demon but is from the start only a poor human being; and above all that he has every moment to atone for his humanity and is tragically consumed by an impossible virtue – all this sets him on a solitary height as the most *venerable* exemplar of the species man; for he desires truth, not as cold, ineffectual knowledge, but as a regulating and punishing judge; truth, not as the egoistic possession of the individual, but as the sacred right to overturn all the boundary-stones of egoistic possessions; in a word, truth as the Last Judgment and not, for instance, as the prey joyfully seized by the individual huntsman. Only insofar as the truthful man possesses the

unconditional will to justice is there anything great in that striving for truth which is everywhere so thoughtlessly glorified: whereas in the eyes of less clear-sighted men a whole host of the most various drives – curiosity, flight from boredom, envy, vanity, the desire for amusement, for example – can be involved in the striving for truth, though in reality they have nothing whatever to do with truth, which has its roots in justice. Thus the world seems to be full of those who 'serve truth', yet the virtue of justice is rarely present, even more rarely recognized and almost always mortally hated: while on the other hand the horde of those who only appear virtuous is at all times received with pomp and honour. The truth is that few serve truth because few possess the pure will to justice, and of these few only a few also possess the strength actually to be just. To possess only the will is absolutely not enough: and the most terrible sufferings sustained by mankind have proceeded precisely from those possessing he drive to justice but lacking the power of judgment; which is why nothing would promote the general wellbeing more mightily than to sow the seeds of correct judgment as widely as possible, so that the fanatic would be distinguished from the judge and the blind desire to be a judge from the conscious ability to judge. But where could a means of implanting the power of judgment be found! – man will always remain in doubt and trepidation whether, when truth and justice are spoken of, it is a fanatic or a judge who is speaking to them. That is why they must be forgiven if they have always extended an especially cordial welcome to those 'servants of truth' who possess neither the will nor the power to judge and set themselves the task of seeking 'pure, self-subsistent' knowledge or, more clearly, truth that eventuates in nothing. There are very many truths that are a matter of complete indifference; there are problems whose just solution does not demand even an effort, let alone a sacrifice. In this region of indifference and absence of danger a man may well succeed in becoming a cold demon of knowledge: and nonetheless, even if in favourable times whole cohorts of scholars and inquirers are transformed into such demons – it will always fortunately be possible that such an age will suffer from a lack of a stern and great sense of justice, that is, of the noblest centre of the so-called drive to truth.

Now picture to yourself the historical virtuoso of the present day: is he the justest man of his time? It is true he has developed in himself such a tenderness and susceptibility of feeling that nothing human is alien to him; the most various ages and persons continue

to sound in kindred notes on the strings of his lyre: he has become a passive sounding-board whose reflected tones act upon other similar sounding-boards: until at last the whole air of an age is filled with the confused humming of these tender and kindred echoes. Yet it seems to me as though only the harmonics of the original historical note are audible: the solidity and power of the original can no longer be divined in the shrill and bubble-thin vibrations of these strings. The original note recalled actions, distress, terrors; this note lulls us and makes of us tame spectators; it is as though the 'Eroica' Symphony had been arranged for two flutes for the entertainment of drowsy opium-smokers. Through this we are already in a position to assess how these virtuosi will stand in regard to modern man's supreme claim to a higher and purer sense of justice; this virtue never has anything pleasing about it, knows no delicious tremors, is harsh and dread-inspiring. In comparison, how low even magnanimity stands in the scale of the virtues, and magnanimity is itself possessed by only a few rare historians! Many more of them attain only to tolerance, to allowing validity to what they cannot deny happened, to explaining away and extenuating, on the correct assumption that the inexperienced will interpret the mere absence of abrasiveness and harsh condemnation of the past as evidence of a just disposition. But only superior strength can judge, weakness is obliged to tolerate if it is not to make a hypocritical pretence of strength and turn justice sitting in judgment into an actor. There still remains a dreadful species of historian, efficient, severe and honest of character but narrow of mind; the will to be just is there, as is the pathos attending the office of judge: but all their verdicts are false, for approximately the same reason as the verdicts of ordinary court juries are false. How improbable it thus is that there should be an abundance of talent for history! Quite apart from the disguised egoists and party-men who employ an air of objectivity in furtherance of their crooked game. And quite apart also from those wholly thoughtless people who when they write history do so in the naive belief that all the popular views of precisely their own age are the right and just views and that to write in accord with the views of their age is the same thing as being just; a belief in which every religion dwells and about which in the case of religions no further comment is needed. These naive historians call the assessment of the opinions and deeds of the past according to the everyday standards of the present moment 'objectivity': it is here they discover the canon of all truth; their task is to adapt the past to contemporary triviality. On the other hand, they

call all historiography 'subjective' that does not accept these popular standards as canonical.

And may an illusion not creep into the word objectivity even in its highest interpretation? According to this interpretation, the word means a condition in the historian which permits him to observe an event in all its motivations and consequences so purely that it has no effect at all on his own subjectivity: it is analogous to that aesthetic phenomenon of detachment from personal interest with which a painter sees in a stormy landscape with thunder and lightning, or a rolling sea, only the picture of them within him, the phenomenon of complete absorption in the things themselves: it is a superstition, however, that the picture which these things evoke in a man possessing such a disposition is a true reproduction of the empirical nature of the things themselves. Or is it supposed that at this moment the things as it were engrave, counterfeit, photograph themselves by their own action on a purely passive medium?

This would be mythology, and bad mythology at that: and it is forgotten, moreover, that that moment is precisely the strongest and most spontaneous moment of creation in the depths of the artist, a moment of composition of the highest sort, the outcome of which may be an artistically true painting but cannot be an historically true one. To think of history objectively in this fashion is the silent work of the dramatist; that is to say, to think of all things in relation to all others and to weave the isolated event into the whole: always with the presupposition that if a unity of plan does not already reside in things it must be implanted into them. Thus man spins his web over the past and subdues it, thus he gives expression to his artistic drive – but not to his drive towards truth or justice. Objectivity and justice have nothing to do with one another. A historiography could be imagined which had in it not a drop of common empirical truth and yet could lay claim to the highest degree of objectivity. Indeed, Grillparzer ventures to declare: 'What is history but the way in which the spirit of man apprehends *events impenetrable to him*; unites things when God alone knows whether they belong together; substitutes something comprehensible for what is incomprehensible; imposes his concept of purpose from without upon a whole which, if it possesses a purpose, does so only inherently; and assumes the operation of chance where a thousand little causes have been at work. All human beings have at the same time their own individual necessity, so that millions of courses run parallel beside one another in straight or crooked lines, frustrate or advance one another, strive

forwards or backwards, and thus assume for one another the character of chance, and so, quite apart from the influence of the occurrences of nature, make it impossible to establish any all-embracing necessity prevailing throughout all events.' But it is exactly this kind of necessity that is supposed to be brought to light as the result of that 'objective' view of things! This is a presupposition which, if enunciated by an historian as an article of faith, would assume a very strange shape; Schiller is quite clear as to the purely subjective nature of this assumption when he says of the historian: 'one phenomenon after another begins to forsake the realm of blind chance and limitless freedom and to take its place as a fitting member of a harmonious whole – *which whole is, of course, present only in his imagination*'. But what is one to make of this assertion, hovering as it does between tautology and nonsense, by one celebrated historical virtuoso: 'the fact of the matter is that all human actions are subject to the mighty and irresistible direction of the course of things, though it may often not be apparent'? Such a proposition is not, as it might perhaps seem, enigmatic wisdom in the shape of plain foolishness, as when Goethe's court gardener says 'Nature may let itself be forced but it cannot be compelled', or in the fairground placard reported by Swift: 'Here can be seen the biggest elephant in the world except itself.' For how are human actions and the course of things to be distinguished from one another? It seems to me in general that historians such as the one we have just quoted cease to instruct as soon as they begin to generalize and then reveal the weakness they feel in the dark obscurities they employ. In other sciences the generalizations are the most important thing, inasmuch as they contain the laws: but if such propositions as that quoted are intended to count as laws, then one must object that in that case the work of the historiographer is wasted; for whatever truth remains in such propositions after the obscurities referred to have been removed is something completely familiar and even trivial; for it will be obvious to everyone through every kind of experience down to the very smallest. To incommode whole nations and expend years of wearisome toil on it, however, is merely to pile experiment upon experiment long after the law intended to be extracted from them has been amply demonstrated: a senseless excess of experimentation which has in fact plagued the natural sciences since the time of Zöllner. If the value of a drama lay solely in its conclusion, the drama itself would be merely the most wearisome and indirect way possible of reaching this goal; and so I hope that the significance of history

will not be thought to lie in its general propositions, as if these were the flower and fruit of the whole endeavour, but that its value will be seen to consist in its taking a familiar, perhaps commonplace theme, an everyday melody, and composing inspired variations on it, enhancing it, elevating it to a comprehensive symbol, and thus disclosing in the original theme a whole world of profundity, power and beauty.

For this, however, there is required above all great artistic facility, creative vision, loving absorption in the empirical data, the capacity to imagine the further development of a given type – in any event, objectivity is required, but as a positive quality. So often objectivity is only a phrase. Instead of the outwardly tranquil but inwardly flashing eye of the artist there is the affectation of tranquillity; just as a lack of feeling and moral strength is accustomed to disguise itself as incisive coldness and detachment. In certain cases banality of ideas, the everyday wisdom which seems calm and tranquil only because it is tedious, ventures to pose as that artistic condition in which the subject becomes silent and wholly imperceptible. What is then preferred is that which produces no emotion at all and the driest phrase is the right phrase. One goes so far, indeed, as to believe that he to whom a moment of the past *means nothing at all* is the proper man to describe it. This is frequently the relationship between classicists and the Greeks they study: they mean nothing to one another – a state of affairs called 'objectivity'! It is precisely where the highest and rarest is to be represented that this ostentatious indifference becomes most infuriating – for it is the *vanity* of the historian which is responsible for it. Such authors incline one to agree with the proposition that a man possesses vanity to the degree that he lacks understanding. No, at any rate be honest! Do not seek the appearance of justice if you are not called to the dreadful vocation of the just man. As though it were the task of every age to have to be just towards everything that has ever existed! It could even be said that ages and generations never do have the right to judge previous ages and generations: such an uncomfortable mission falls only to individuals, and these of the rarest kind. Who compels you to judge? And, moreover – test yourself to see whether you could be just if you wanted to be! As judge, you must stand higher than he who is to be judged; whereas all you are is subsequent to him. The guests who come last to table have to be content with the last places: and do you want the first? Then at least perform some high and great deed; perhaps then they really will make room for you, even if you do come last.

If you are to venture to interpret the past you can do so only out of the fullest exertion of the vigour of the present: only when you put forth your noblest qualities in all their strength will you divine what is worth knowing and preserving in the past. Like to like! Otherwise you will draw the past down to you. Do not believe historiography that does not spring from the head of the rarest minds; and you will know the quality of a mind when it is obliged to express something universal or to repeat something universally known: the genuine historian must possess the power to remint the universally known into something never heard of before, and to express the universal so simply and profoundly that the simplicity is lost in the profundity and the profundity in the simplicity. No one can be a great historian, an artist and a shallowpate at the same time: on the other hand, one should not underrate the workmen who sift and carry merely because they can certainly never become great historians; but even less should one confuse them with them, but regard them rather as the necessary apprentices and handymen in the service of the master: much as the French used, with greater naivety than is possible to a German, to speak of the *historiens de M. Thiers*. These workmen are gradually to become great scholars, but cannot for that reason ever be masters. A great scholar and a great shallowpate – these two go rather better under one hat.

To sum up: history is written by the experienced and superior man. He who has not experienced greater and more exalted things than others will not know how to interpret the great and exalted things of the past. When the past speaks it always speaks as an oracle: only if you are an architect of the future and know the present will you understand it. The extraordinary degree and extent of the influence exercised by Delphi is nowadays explained principally by the fact that the Delphic priests had an exact knowledge of the past; now it would be right to say that only he who constructs the future has a right to judge the past. If you look ahead and set yourself a great goal, you at the same time restrain that rank analytical impulse which makes the present into a desert and all tranquillity, all peaceful growth and maturing almost impossible. Draw about yourself the fence of a great and comprehensive hope, of a hope-filled striving. Form within yourself an image to which the future shall correspond, and forget the superstition that you are epigones. You will have enough to ponder and to invent when you reflect on the life of the future; but do not ask of history that it should show you the How? and the Wherewith? to this life. If, on the other hand, you acquire a

living knowledge of the history of great men, you will learn from it a supreme commandment: to become mature and to flee from that paralyzing upbringing of the present age which sees its advantage in preventing your growth so as to rule and exploit you to the full while you are still immature. And if you want biographies, do not desire those which bear the legend 'Herr So-and-So and his age', but those upon whose title-page there would stand 'a fighter against his age'. Satiate your soul with Plutarch and when you believe in his heroes dare at the same time to believe in yourself. With a hundred such men – raised in this unmodern way, that is to say become mature and accustomed to the heroic – the whole noisy sham-culture of our age could now be silenced for ever. –

7

When the historical sense reigns *without restraint*, and all its consequences are realized, it uproots the future because it destroys illusions and robs the things that exist of the atmosphere in which alone they can live. Historical justice, even when it is genuine and practised with the purest of intentions, is therefore a dreadful virtue because it always undermines the living thing and brings it down: its judgment is always annihilating. If the historical drive does not also contain a drive to construct, if the purpose of destroying and clearing is not to allow a future already alive in anticipation to raise its house on the ground thus liberated, if justice alone prevails, then the instinct for creation will be enfeebled and discouraged. A religion, for example, which is intended to be transformed into historical knowledge under the hegemony of pure historical justice, a religion which is intended to be understood through and through as an object of science and learning, will when this process is at an end also be found to have been destroyed. The reason is that historical verification always brings to light so much that is false, crude, inhuman, absurd, violent that the mood of pious illusion in which alone anything that wants to live can live necessarily crumbles away: for it is only in love, only when shaded by the illusion produced by love, that is to say in the unconditional faith in right and perfection, that man is creative. Anything that constrains a man to love less than unconditionally has severed the roots of his strength: he will wither away, that is to say become dishonest. In producing this effect, history is the antithesis of art: and only if history can endure to be transformed into a work of art will it perhaps be able to preserve instincts or even

evoke them. Such a historiography would, however, be altogether contrary to the analytical and inartistic tendencies of our time, which would indeed declare it false. But a history which, lacking the direction of an inner drive to construct, does nothing but destroy, in the long run denaturizes its instruments: for such men destroy illusions and 'he who destroys the illusions in himself and others is punished by nature, the cruellest tyrant'. For a good length of time, it is true, one can occupy oneself with history in a perfectly innocent and harmless way, as though it were merely an occupation like any other; recent theology especially seems to have entered into partnership with history out of pure innocence, and even now it almost refuses to see that, probably much against its will, it has thereby placed itself in the service of the Voltairean *écrasez.** No one should suppose that this development conceals a powerful new constructive instinct – unless, that is, one is to regard the so-called Protestant Union† as the work of a new religion, and perhaps the jurist Holtzendorf (the editor and prefacer of the even more problematical Protestant Bible) as John the Baptist at the river Jordan. For some time yet the Hegelian philosophy still smouldering in older heads may assist in propagating this innocence, perhaps by teaching one how to distinguish the 'idea of Christianity' from its manifold imperfect 'phenomenal forms' and even to convince oneself that it is the 'preferred tendency of the idea' to reveal itself in ever purer forms, and at last in its purest, most transparent, indeed hardly visible form, in the brains of the contemporary *theologus liberalis vulgaris*. But when he hears these purest-of-the-pure Christians speaking of earlier impure Christians the impartial auditor often has the impression that what is being spoken of is not Christianity at all but – well, what are we to think? When we find the 'greatest theologian of the century'‡ characterizing Christianity as the religion which can 'discover itself in all existing and in several other barely possible religions', and when the 'true church' is supposed to be that which 'becomes a flowing mass, where there are no contours, where every part is now here, now there, and everything blends peacefully together' – again, what are we to think?

What one can learn in the case of Christianity – that under the influence of a historical treatment it has become denaturized, until a

*'Voltairean *écrasez*': alludes to Voltaire's motto 'écrasez l'infame!' – destroy the infamous thing (i.e. the Church).

†Protestant Union: the military alliance formed between 1608 and 1621 by the Protestant princes of Germany.

‡'greatest theologian of the century': Schleiermacher (see glossary).

completely historical, that is to say just treatment resolves it into pure knowledge about Christianity and thereby destroys it – can be studied in everything else that possesses life: that it ceases to live when it is dissected completely, and lives a painful and morbid life when one begins to practise historical dissection upon it. There are people who believe that German music could have a transforming and reforming effect on the Germans: they are angered, and consider it an injustice against the most vigorous part of our culture, when they see such men as Mozart and Beethoven already engulfed by all the learned dust of biography and compelled by the torture-instruments of historical criticism to answer a thousand impertinent questions. Does it not mean its premature death, or at least paralysis, when that, the living effects of which are not yet exhausted, is subjected to curious investigation of the countless minutiae of its life and works, and when problems of knowledge are sought where one ought to learn to live and forget all problems? Imagine a couple of these modern biographers transported to the birthplace of Christianity or of the Lutheran Reformation; their sober, pragmatic curiosity would have exactly sufficed to render any *actio in distans* impossible: just as the most wretched little animal can prevent the mightiest oak-tree from coming into existence by eating the acorn. All living things require an atmosphere around them, a mysterious misty vapour; if they are deprived of this envelope, if a religion, an art, a genius is condemned to revolve as a star without atmosphere, we should no longer be surprised if they quickly wither and grow hard and unfruitful. It is the same with all great things, 'which never succeed without some illusion', as Hans Sachs says in the *Meistersinger*.

But every nation, too, indeed every human being that wants to become *mature* requires a similar enveloping illusion, a similar protective and veiling cloud; nowadays, however, maturity as such is hated because history is held in greater honour than life. There is, indeed, rejoicing that now 'science is beginning to dominate life': that condition may, possibly, be attained; but life thus dominated is not of much value because it is far less *living* and guarantees far less life for the future than did a former life dominated not by knowledge but by instinct and powerful illusions. But the present age is, as aforesaid, supposed to be an age, not of whole, mature and harmonious personalities, but of labour of the greatest possible common utility. That means, however, that men have to be adjusted to the purposes of the age so as to be ready for employment as soon as

possible: they must labour in the factories of the general good before they are mature, indeed so that they shall not become mature – for this would be a luxury which would deprive the 'labour market' of a great deal of its workforce. Some birds are blinded so that they may sing more beautifully; I do not think the men of today sing more beautifully than their grandfathers, but I know they have been blinded. The means, the infamous means used to blind them, however, is *too bright, too sudden, too varying light*. The young man is swept along through all the millennia: youths who understand nothing of war, diplomatic action, commercial policy are thought fit to be introduced to political history. But as the youth races through history, so do we modern men race through art galleries and listen to concerts. We feel that one thing sounds different from another, that one thing produces a different effect from another: increasingly to lose this sense of strangeness, no longer to be very much surprised at anything, finally to be pleased with everything – that is then no doubt called the historical sense, historical culture. To speak without euphemism: the mass of the influx is so great, the strange, barbaric and violent things that press upon the youthful soul do so with such overwhelming power that its only refuge is in an intentional stupidity. Where there has been a stronger and more subtle awareness, another emotion has no doubt also appeared: disgust. The young man has become so homeless and doubts all concepts and all customs. He now knows: every age is different, it does not matter what you are like. In melancholy indifference he lets opinion after opinion pass him by and he understands how Hölderlin felt when he read Diogenes Laertius on the lives and teachings of the Greek philosophers: 'I have again found here what I have often before discovered, that the transitoriness and changeableness of human thoughts and systems strike me as being almost more tragic than the destinies which alone are usually called real.' No, to be so overwhelmed and bewildered by history is, as the ancients demonstrate, not at all necessary for youth, but in the highest degree dangerous to it, as the moderns demonstrate. But now notice the actual student of history, the heir of an enfeeblement already visible almost before he has ceased to be a boy. He has acquired the 'methods' for doing work of his own, the right technique and the noble bearing of the master; a wholly isolated little chapter of the past has fallen victim to his astuteness and the methods he has learned; he has already produced, indeed to use a prouder word, he has 'created' something, he has now become an active servant of

truth and a lord in the universal empire of history. If already as a boy he was 'ripe', now he is over-ripe: one needs only to shake him and wisdom comes clattering down into one's lap; but the wisdom is rotten and there is a worm in every apple. Believe me: if men are to labour and be useful in the factory of science before they are mature, science will soon be ruined just as effectively as the slaves thus employed too early. I regret the need to make use of the jargon of the slave-owner and employer of labour to describe things which in themselves ought to be thought of as free of utility and raised above the necessities of life; but the words 'factory', 'labour market', 'supply', 'making profitable', and whatever auxiliary verbs egoism now employs, come unbidden to the lips when one wishes to describe the most recent generation of men of learning. Sterling mediocrity grows even more mediocre, science ever more profitable in the economic sense. Actually our most recent men of learning are wise on one point, and on that they are, I admit, wiser than anyone has ever been, but on all other points they are infinitely different – to use a cautious expression – from any man of learning of the old stamp. This notwithstanding, they demand honours and advantages for themselves, as though the state and public opinion were duty bound to accept the new coins as being of equal value to the old. The carters have made a contract with one another and by restamping themselves as geniuses have decreed that genius is superfluous; probably a later age will see that their buildings are carted together, not constructed. Those who unwearyingly repeat the modern call to battle and sacrifice 'Division of labour! Fall in!' must for once be told in round and plain terms: if you want to push science forward as quickly as possible you will succeed in destroying it as quickly as possible; just as a hen perishes if it is compelled to lay eggs too quickly. Science has certainly been pushed forward at an astonishing speed over the past decades: but just look at the men of learning, the exhausted hens. They are in truth not 'harmonious' natures; they can only cackle more than ever because they lay eggs more often: though the eggs, to be sure, have got smaller and smaller (though the books have got thicker and thicker). As the final and most natural outcome we have the universally admired 'popularization' (together with 'feminization' and 'infantization') of science, that is to say the infamous trimming of the coat of science to fit the body of the 'general public' – to employ a cutting expression for an activity suited to tailors. Goethe saw this as a misuse of science and demanded that the sciences should affect the outside world only through *enhanced practical*

application. The older generation of men of learning, moreover, had good grounds for regarding such a misuse as difficult and burdensome: it is on equally good grounds that the younger generation finds it easy, for, except in the case of a tiny corner of knowledge, they themselves are very much 'general public' and share its needs. They have only to sit at their ease for once and they are able to open to the curiosity of this general populace even the little realm of their own special study. This relaxation is afterwards called 'the man of learning modestly condescending to his people': while in reality the man of learning has, to the extent that he is not a man of learning but one of the mob, descended only to his own level. Create for yourselves the concept of a 'people': it could never be too exalted or too noble a concept. If you thought well of the people you would show them compassion and would guard against offering them your historical aqua fortis as a refreshing draught of life. But in your hearts you despise them, for you cannot bring yourself seriously to care about their future, and your behaviour is that of practical pessimists, by which I mean men directed by a presentiment of coming disaster and therefore sluggishly indifferent to the wellbeing of others and to your own as well. If only the ground will go on bearing *us*! And if it ceases to bear us, that too is very well: – that is their feeling and thus they live an *ironic* existence.

8

It may seem strange, though it ought not to seem self-contradictory, when I ascribe a kind of *ironic self-awareness* to an age accustomed to break into such loud and innocent rejoicing at its historical culture, and say that it is infused with a presentiment that there is really nothing to rejoice about and a fear that all the merriment of historical knowledge will soon be over and done with. Goethe presented to us a comparable enigma in regard to the individual personality in his noteworthy account of Newton: he discovers at the foundation (or, more correctly, at the highest point) of his being 'a troubled presentiment that he is in error', the momentary expression, as it were, of a superior consciousness that has attained to a certain ironical overview of his inherent nature. So it is that we find in precisely the greatest and more highly developed historical men a suppressed consciousness, often amounting to a general scepticism, of how great an absurdity and superstition it is to believe that the education of a nation has to be as preponderantly historical as it is now; for pre-

cisely the most vigorous nations, vigorous in deeds and works, lived differently from this and raised their children differently. But that absurdity and superstition is suited to us – so runs the sceptical objection – to us, the latecomers, the last pale offspring of mightier and happier races, to us who are the fulfilment of Hesiod's prophesy that men would one day be born already grey-haired and that as soon as he saw that sign Zeus would eradicate this race. Historical culture is indeed a kind of inborn grey-hairedness, and those who bear its mark from childhood must instinctively believe in the *old age of mankind*: to age, however, there pertains an appropriate senile occupation, that of looking back, of reckoning up, of closing accounts, of seeking consolation through remembering what has been, in short historical culture. But the human race is a tough and persistent thing and will not permit its progress – forwards or backwards – to be viewed in terms of millennia, or indeed hardly in terms of hundreds of millennia; that is to say, it will not be viewed as a whole *at all* by that infinitesimal atom, the individual man. What is there in a couple of thousand years (or in other words the space of 34 consecutive generations of 60 years each) which permits us to speak of the 'youth' of mankind at the beginning and the 'old age' of mankind at the end? Is there not concealed in this paralysing belief that humanity is already declining a misunderstanding of a Christian theological idea inherited from the Middle Ages, the idea that the end of the world is coming, that we are fearfully awaiting the Last Judgment? Is the increasing need for historical judgment not that same idea in a new dress, as though our age, being the ultimate age, were empowered to exercise over all the past that universal judgment which Christian belief never supposed would be pronounced by men but by 'the Son of Man'? In earlier times this '*memento mori*' addressed to mankind as a whole as well as to individual men was an ever-painful goad and as it were the high point of medieval learning and conscience. Its modern antithesis, '*memento vivere*', is, to speak frankly, still a somewhat modest little sound rather than a full-throated one, and has something almost dishonest about it. For mankind continues to treasure its *memento mori* and reveals the fact through its universal need for history: knowledge, its mightiest wingbeats notwithstanding, has not been able to soar aloft, a profound sense of hopelessness remains and has assumed that historical colouring with which all higher education and culture is now saddened and darkened. A religion which of all the hours of a man's life holds the last to be the most important, which prophesies an end to

all life on earth and condemns all who live to live in the fifth act of a tragedy, may well call forth the profoundest and noblest powers, but it is inimical to all new planting, bold experimentation, free aspiration; it resists all flight into the unknown because it loves and hopes for nothing there: it allows what is becoming to force its way up only with reluctance, and then when the time is ripe it sacrifices it or sets it aside as a seducer to existence, as a liar as to the value of existence. What the Florentines did when, under the influence of Savonarola's preaching, they made that celebrated holocaust of paintings, manuscripts, mirrors and masks, Christianity would like to do to every culture which stimulates continued striving and bears that *memento vivere* as its motto; and if it proves impossible to do this in a blunt and direct manner, that is to say by force, it nonetheless achieves its aim by allying itself with historical culture, usually without the latter's knowledge moreover, and speaking henceforth through its mouth rejects with a shrug everything still coming into being and smothers it in the awareness of being a latecomer and epigone, in short of being born grey-haired. Austere and profoundly serious reflection on the worthlessness of all that has occurred, on the ripeness of the world for judgment, is dissipated into the sceptical attitude that it is at any rate as well to know about all that has occurred, since it is too late to do anything better. Thus the historical sense makes its servants passive and retrospective; and almost the only time the sufferer from the fever of history becomes active is when this sense is in abeyance through momentary forgetfulness – though even then, as soon as the act is finished he at once dissects it, prevents it from producing any further effects by analysing it, and finally skins it for the purpose of 'historical study'. In this sense we are still living in the Middle Ages and history is still disguised theology: just as the reverence with which the unlearned laity treat the learned class is inherited from the reverence with which it treated the clergy. What one formerly gave to the church one now gives, though more sparingly, to learning: but that one gives at all is an effect of the church's former influence – the modern spirit, as is well known, is somewhat niggardly and unskilled in the noble virtue of generosity.

Perhaps this observation will not be very acceptable, perhaps as unacceptable as my derivation of our excess of history from the medieval *memento mori* and the hopelessness in regard to all coming ages of human existence which Christianity bears in its heart. If so, you might try to replace this explanation, which I offer only with some hesitation, with a better one; for the origin of historical culture

– its quite radical conflict with the spirit of any 'new age', any 'modern awareness' – this origin *must* itself be known historically, history *must* itself resolve the problem of history, knowledge *must* turn its sting against itself – this threefold *must* is the imperative of the 'new age', supposing this age really does contain anything new, powerful, original and promising more life. Or is it actually the case that we Germans – to leave the Romance nations out of account – must always be no more than 'heirs' in all the higher affairs of culture, because that is all we *can* ever be; a proposition once memorably expressed by Wilhelm Wackernagel: 'We Germans are a nation of heirs, with all our higher knowledge, even with our beliefs, no more than heirs of the world of antiquity; even those hostile to it continually breathe the immortal spirit of classical culture beside the spirit of Christianity, and if anyone succeeded in excluding these two elements from the atmosphere which surrounds the inner world of man there would not be much left to prolong a life of the spirit.' And even if we Germans were really no more than heirs – to be able to look upon such a culture as *that* as our rightful inheritance would make the appellation 'heirs' the greatest and proudest possible: yet we would nonetheless be obliged to ask whether it really was our eternal destiny to be *pupils of declining antiquity*: at some time or other we might be permitted gradually to set our goal higher and more distant, some time or other we ought to be allowed to claim credit for having developed the spirit of Alexandrian-Roman culture so nobly and fruitfully – among other means through our universal history – that we might now as a reward be permitted to set ourselves the even mightier task of striving to get behind and beyond this Alexandrian world and boldly to seek our models in the original ancient Greek world of greatness, naturalness and humanity. *But there we also discover the reality of an essentially unhistorical culture and one which is nonetheless, or rather on that account, an inexpressibly richer and more vital culture.* Even if we Germans were in fact nothing but successors – we could not be anything greater or prouder than successors if we had appropriated such a culture and were the heirs and successors of that.

What I mean by this – and it is all I mean – is that the thought of being epigones, which can often be a painful thought, is also capable of evoking great effects and grand hopes for the future in both an individual and in a nation, provided we regard ourselves as the heirs and successors of the astonishing powers of antiquity and see in this our honour and our spur. What I do not mean, therefore, is that we

should live as pale and stunted late descendants of strong races coldly prolonging their life as antiquarians and gravediggers. Late descendants of that sort do indeed live an ironic existence: annihilation follows at the heels of the limping gait of their life; they shudder at it when they rejoice in the past, for they are embodied memory yet their remembrance is meaningless if they have no heirs. Thus they are seized by the troubled presentiment that their life is an injustice, since there will be no future life to justify it.

But suppose we imagine these antiquarian latecomers suddenly exchanging this painfully ironic modesty for a state of shamelessness; suppose we imagine them announcing in shrill tones: the race is now at its zenith, for only now does it possess knowledge of itself, only now has it revealed itself to itself – we should then behold a spectacle through which, as in a parable, the enigmatic significance for German culture of a certain very celebrated philosophy would be unriddled. I believe there has been no dangerous vacillation or crisis of German culture this century that has not been rendered more dangerous by the enormous and still continuing influence of this philosophy, the Hegelian. The belief that one is a latecomer of the ages is, in any case, paralysing and depressing: but it must appear dreadful and devastating when such a belief one day by a bold inversion raises this latecomer to godhood as the true meaning and goal of all previous events, when his miserable condition is equated with a completion of world-history. Such a point of view has accustomed the Germans to talk of a 'world-process' and to justify their own age as the necessary result of this world-process; such a point of view has set history, insofar as history is 'the concept that realizes itself', 'the dialectics of the spirit of the peoples' and the 'world-tribunal', in place of the other spiritual powers, art and religion, as the sole sovereign power.

History understood in this Hegelian fashion has been mockingly called God's sojourn on earth, though the god referred to has been created only by history. This god, however, became transparent and comprehensible to himself within the Hegelian craniums and has already ascended all the dialectically possible steps of his evolution up to this self-revelation: so that for Hegel the climax and terminus of the world-process coincided with his own existence in Berlin. Indeed, he ought to have said that everything that came after him was properly to be considered merely as a musical coda to the world-historical rondo or, even more properly, as superfluous. He did not say it: instead he implanted into the gener-

ation thoroughly leavened by him that admiration for the 'power of history' which in practice transforms every moment into a naked admiration for success and leads to an idolatry of the factual: which idolatry is now generally described by the very mythological yet quite idiomatic expression 'to accommodate oneself to the facts'. But he who has once learned to bend his back and bow his head before the 'power of history' at last nods 'Yes' like a Chinese mechanical doll to every power, whether it be a government or public opinion or a numerical majority, and moves his limbs to the precise rhythm at which any 'power' whatever pulls the strings. If every success is a rational necessity, if every event is a victory of the logical or the 'idea' – then down on your knees quickly and do reverence to the whole stepladder of 'success'! What, are there no longer any living mythologies? What, the religions are dying out? Just behold the religion of the power of history, regard the priests of the mythology of the idea and their battered knees! Is it too much to say that all the virtues now attend on this new faith? Or is it not selflessness when the historical man lets himself be emptied until he is no more than an objective sheet of plate glass? Is it not magnanimity when, by worshipping in every force the force itself, one renounces all force of one's own in Heaven and upon earth? Is it not justice always to hold the scales of the powers in one's hands and to watch carefully to see which tends to be the stronger and heavier? And what a school of decorum is such a way of contemplating history! To take everything objectively, to grow angry at nothing, to love nothing, to understand everything, how soft and pliable that makes one; and even if someone raised in this school should for once get publicly angry, that is still cause for rejoicing, for one realizes it is intended only for artistic effect, it is *ira* and *studium* and yet altogether *sine ira et studio*.*

How obsolete and old-fashioned my objections to this complex of mythology and virtue are! But I must out with them, even though they excite laughter. I would say therefore: history always inculcates: 'there was once', morality: 'you ought not to' or 'you ought not to have'. Thus history amounts to a compendium of factual immorality. How far astray he would go who regarded history as being at the same time the judge of this factual immorality! Morality is offended, for example, by the fact that a Raphael had to die at thirty-six: such a being ought not to die. If, in the face of this, you wanted to come to

*Tacitus described his own manner of writing history as '*sina ira et studio*' ('without anger and without partisan zeal'). *Studium* means 'course of study'.

the aid of history as apologists of the factual, you would say: he had expressed everything that was in him, had he lived longer he would have produced only a repetition of the beauty he had created already, and so forth. In that way you become Devil's advocates: you make success, the factual, into your idol, while in reality the factual is always stupid and has at all times resembled a calf rather than a god. As apologists of history you have, moreover, ignorance as a prompter: for it is only because you do not know what such a *natura naturans** as Raphael is that you are not incensed to know that it once was but will never be again. We have recently been informed that, with his eighty-two years, Goethe outlived himself: yet I would gladly exchange a couple of Goethe's 'outlived' years for whole cartloads of fresh modern lifetimes, so as to participate in such conversations as Goethe conducted with Eckermann and thus be preserved from all and any up-to-date instruction from the legionaries of the moment. In relation to such dead men, how few of the living have a right to live at all! That the many are alive and those few live no longer is nothing but a brute truth, that is to say an incorrigible stupidity, a blunt 'thus it is' in opposition to morality's 'it ought not to be thus'. Yes, in opposition to morality! For speak of any virtue you will, of justice, magnanimity, bravery, of the wisdom and sympathy of man – in every case it becomes a virtue through rising against that blind power of the factual and tyranny of the actual and by submitting to laws that are not the laws of the fluctuations of history. It always swims against the tide of history, whether by combating its passions as the most immediate stupid fact of its existence or by dedicating itself to truthfulness as falsehood spins its glittering web around it. If history in general were nothing more than 'the world-system of passion and error', mankind would have to read it as Goethe advised his readers to read *Werther*: as if it called to them 'be a man and do not follow after me!' Fortunately, however, it also preserves the memory of the great fighters *against history*, that is to say against the blind power of the actual, and puts itself in the pillory by exalting precisely these men as the real historical natures who bothered little with the 'thus it is' so as to follow 'thus it shall be' with a more cheerful pride. Not to bear their race to the grave, but to found a new generation of this race – that is what impels them ceaselessly forward: and even if they themselves are late-born – there is a way of living which will

**natura naturans*: Spinoza's term for God under the aspect of creating nature, as opposed to created nature – as the cause of all things.

make them forget it – coming generations will know them only as first-born.

9

Is our age perhaps such a first-born? – The vehemence of its historical sense is so great and is expressed in so universal and altogether unrestrained a manner, that future ages will in fact count it a first-born at any rate in this respect – assuming, that is, that there will be any *future ages* in the cultural sense. But it is precisely this fact which evokes in us a grave doubt. Close beside the pride of modern man there stands his ironic view of himself, his awareness that he has to live in an historicizing, as it were a twilight mood, his fear that his youthful hopes and energy will not survive into the future. Here and there one goes further, into *cynicism*, and justifies the course of history, indeed the entire evolution of the world, in a manner especially adapted to the use of modern man, according to the cynical canon: as things are they had to be, as men now are they were bound to become, none may resist this inevitability. The pleasant feeling produced by this kind of cynicism is the refuge of him who cannot endure the ironical state; and the last decade has, moreover, made him a present of one of its fairest inventions, a full and rounded phrase to describe this cynicism: it calls his way of living in the fashion of the age and wholly without reflection 'the total surrender of the personality to the world-process'. The personality and the world-process! The world-process and the personality of the flea! If only one were not compelled everlastingly to hear the hyperbole of hyperboles, the word 'world, world, world' – when one ought more honestly to speak of 'man, man, man'! Heirs of the Greeks and Romans? of Christianity? To these cynics that seems nothing; but heirs of the world-process! Summit and target of the world-process! Meaning and solution of all the riddles of evolution come to light in modern man, the ripest fruit of the tree of knowledge! – that I call an ecstatic feeling of pride; it is by this sign that one can recognize the first-born of all ages, even though they may have also come last. Contemplation of history has never flown so far, not even in dreams; for now the history of mankind is only the continuation of the history of animals and plants; even in the profoundest depths of the sea the universal historian still finds traces of himself as living slime; gazing in amazement, as at a miracle, at the tremendous course mankind has already run, his gaze trembles at that even more astonishing miracle, modern man himself, who is capable of surveying this

course. He stands high and proud upon the pyramid of the world-process; as he lays the keystone of his knowledge at the top of it he seems to call out to nature all around him: 'We have reached the goal, we are the goal, we are nature perfected.'

Overproud European of the nineteenth century, you are raving! Your knowledge does not perfect nature, it only destroys your own nature. Compare for once the heights of your capacity for knowledge with the depths of your incapacity for action. It is true you climb upon the sunbeams of knowledge up to Heaven, but you also climb down to chaos. Your manner of moving, that of climbing upon knowledge, is your fatality; the ground sinks away from you into the unknown; there is no longer any support for your life, only spider's threads which every new grasp of knowledge tears apart. – But enough of this seriousness, since it is also possible to view the matter more cheerfully.

The madly thoughtless shattering and dismantling of all foundations, their dissolution into a continual evolving that flows ceaselessly away, the tireless unspinning and historicizing of all there has ever been by modern man, the great cross-spider at the node of the cosmic web – all this may concern and dismay moralists, artists, the pious, even statesmen; *we* shall for once let it cheer us by looking at it in the glittering magic mirror of a *philosophical parodist* in whose head the age has come to an ironical awareness of itself, and has done so with a clarity which (to speak Goethean) 'amounts to infamy'. Hegel once taught us: 'when the spirit changes direction, we philosophers too are there': our age changed direction, to self-irony, and behold! E. von Hartmann too was there and indited his celebrated philosophy of the unconscious, or – to speak more clearly – his philosophy of unconscious irony. We have seldom read a merrier invention or a more philosophical piece of roguery than this of Hartmann; whoever is not enlightened by it as to the nature of *becoming*, whoever is not inwardly cleared out and set in order, indeed, in regard to that matter, is truly ripe and ready for becoming a has-been. The beginning and goal of the world-process, from the first stab of consciousness to its being hurled back into nothingness, together with an exact description of the task of our generation within this world-process, all presented direct from that cleverly discovered well of inspiration, the unconscious, and gleaming with apocalyptic light, all so deceptively mimicking straight-faced earnestness as though it were a genuine serious philosophy and not only a joke philosophy – such a production marks

its creator as one of the first philosophical parodists of all time; let us therefore sacrifice on his altar, let us sacrifice to him, the discoverer of a true universal medicine, a lock of hair – to steal one of Schleiermacher's terms for expressing admiration. For what medicine could be more efficacious against excess of historical culture than Hartmann's parody of world-history?

Expressed without the rhetoric, what Hartmann proclaims to us from the smokey tripod of unconscious irony amounts to this: he tells us it would be quite sufficient, for our time to be exactly as it is, to bring about, eventually, a condition in which people would find this existence intolerable: which we truly believe. This dreadful ossification of our age, this restless rattling of the bones – such as David Strauss has naively described to us as the fairest factuality – is justified by Hartmann, not only from behind, *ex causis efficientibus*, but even from in front, *ex causa finali*; the rogue illumines our age with the light of the Last Day, and it turns out that our age is a very fine one, especially for him who wants to suffer as acutely as possible from the indigestibility of life and for whom therefore that Last Day cannot come quickly enough. It is true that Hartmann calls the time of life mankind is now approaching its 'years of manhood': but by this he means the happy condition in which all that is left is 'solid mediocrity', art is that which 'perhaps offers entertainment to the Berlin businessman of an evening', in which 'the age no longer requires genius, because it would mean casting pearls before swine or because the age has advanced beyond the stage appropriate to geniuses to a more important one' – to a stage of social evolution, that is to say, at which every worker, 'having a workday which leaves him adequate leisure for intellectual training, leads a comfortable existence'. Rogue of rogues, you give voice to the longings of contemporary mankind: but you likewise know the spectre that will stand at the end of these years of manhood as an outcome of that intellectual training in solid mediocrity – disgust. Things are already in a visibly sorry state, but they will get very much sorrier, 'the Anti-Christ is visibly extending his influence wider and wider' – but that is how it *must* be, that is what it *must* come to, for the road we have taken can lead only to disgust with all existence. 'Let us therefore press the world-process vigorously forward as workers in the vineyard of the Lord, for it is the process alone that can lead to redemption!'

The vineyard of the Lord! The process! Redemption! Who cannot see and hear in this how historical culture, which knows only the word 'becoming', is here deliberately disguising itself as a parodistic

deformity, how from behind a grotesque mask it utters the most mischievous nonsense about itself? For what does this last roguish summons to the workers in the vineyard really demand of them? What work are they to press vigorously forward? Or, to put the question differently: what does the historically cultivated man, the modern fanatic of the process swimming and drowning in the stream of becoming, have left to do if he is one day to harvest that disgust we have spoken of, the most exquisite grape of the vineyard? – He has to do nothing but go on living as he has lived hitherto, go on loving what he has loved hitherto, go on hating what he has hated hitherto, and go on reading the newspapers he has read hitherto; for him there is only one sin – to live differently from the way in which he has hitherto lived. How he has hitherto lived, however, is recorded for us in giant monumental characters on that celebrated page which has sent the whole contemporary cultured rabble into ecstasies because they see in them their own justification blazing forth in apocalyptic light. For what the unconscious parodist demands of each individual is 'the total surrender of the personality to the world-process for the sake of its goal, world-redemption'; or even more clearly: 'affirmation of the will to live is proclaimed as for the present the only right course; for only in a total surrender to life and its sorrows, and not in a cowardly renunciation and withdrawal, is anything to be achieved for the world-process', 'the striving for denial of the individual will is as foolish and useless as, indeed even more foolish than, suicide'. 'The thinking reader will understand without further elucidation what shape a practical philosophy erected on these principles would assume, and that such a philosophy can embody, not a sundering from life, but only the fullest reconciliation with it.'

The thoughtful reader will understand – as if anyone could misunderstand Hartmann! And how unspeakably amusing it is that he should be misunderstood! Are the contemporary Germans a very refined people? A worthy Englishman finds them lacking in 'delicacy of perception', and ventures indeed to say: 'in the German mind there does seem to be something splay, something blunt-edged, unhandy and infelicitous' – would the great German parodist contradict this? It is true that, according to him, we are approaching 'that ideal condition in which the human race creates its history with full conscious awareness': but we are patently still far from that perhaps even more ideal condition in which mankind can read Hartmann's book with full conscious awareness. If they ever do so, no man will ever again utter the words 'world-process'

without smiling; for they will call to mind the time when Hartmann's parodistic gospel was listened to, absorbed, attacked, revered, propagated and canonized with all the simple honesty of the 'German mind', indeed with 'the wry earnestness of the owl', as Goethe puts it. But the world must get on, that ideal condition will not be created by dreaming, it must be fought and struggled for, and the path to redemption from that owlish earnestness lies only through cheerfulness. The time will come when one will prudently refrain from all constructions of the world-process or even of the history of man; a time when one will regard not the masses but individuals, who form a kind of bridge across the turbulent stream of becoming. These individuals do not carry forward any kind of process but live contemporaneously with one another; thanks to history, which permits such a collaboration, they live as that republic of genius of which Schopenhauer once spoke; one giant calls to another across the desert intervals of time and, undisturbed by the excited chattering dwarfs who creep about beneath them, the exalted spirit-dialogue goes on. It is the task of history to be the mediator between them and thus again and again to inspire and lend the strength for the production of the great man. No, the goal of humanity cannot lie in its end but only in its highest exemplars.

Our comedian has, of course, a different point of view, and with that admirable dialectic which is as genuine as its admirers are admirable he tells us: 'The concept of evolution is not compatible with ascribing to the world-process an infinite duration in the past, since then every conceivable evolution must have already been run through, which is not the case (oh rogue!); so likewise we cannot concede to the process an infinite duration in the future; both would annul the concept of evolution towards a goal (rogue again!) and would make the world-process resemble the Danaides' water-jugs. The complete victory of the logical over the illogical (oh rogue of rogues!) must, however, coincide with the temporal end of the world-process, the Last Day.' No, you alert and mocking spirit, as long as the illogical reigns as it does today, as long, for example, as one can speak of the 'world-process' as you speak of it and gain universal applause, the Last Day is still far off: for it is still too cheerful on this earth, many illusions still flourish, for example the illusion your contemporaries harbour about you, we are not yet ready to be hurled back into your nothingness: for we believe that it will be even merrier here once people have begun to understand you, you misunderstood reader of the unconscious. If, however, disgust should

nonetheless come with power, as you have prophesied to your readers, if your account of your present and future should turn out to be right – and no one has despised them with such disgust as you have – then I am quite willing to vote with the majority, in the form proposed by you, that next Saturday night punctually at twelve o'clock the world shall perish; and our decree shall conclude: from tomorrow there shall be no more time and the newspapers shall appear no more. But perhaps our decree will have no effect: in that event, though, we shall at least have time to perform a fine experiment. We shall take a pair of scales and place Hartmann's unconscious on one of them and Hartmann's world-process on the other. There are people who believe they will weigh exactly the same: for in each of them there would lie an equally bad expression and an equally good joke. – Once Hartmann's joke has been understood, Hartmann's expression 'world-process' will be of no use except as a joke. It has, in fact, for long been high time that the excesses of the historical sense, the immoderate revelling in the process at the expense of being and life, the senseless displacement of all perspectives, were assaulted by all the militia satirical malice can summon; and it shall always be said in praise of the philosopher of the unconscious that he was the first to feel how ludicrous the idea of the 'world-process' is and to make others feel it even more strongly by the singular earnestness of his presentation of it. To what end the 'world' exists, to what end 'mankind' exists, ought not to concern us at all for the moment except as objects of humour: for the presumptuousness of the little human worm is the funniest thing at present on the world's stage; on the other hand, do ask yourself why you, the individual, exist, and if you can get no other answer try for once to justify the meaning of your existence as it were *a posteriori* by setting before yourself an aim, a goal, a 'to this end', an exalted and noble 'to this end'. Perish in pursuit of this and only this – I know of no better aim of life than that of perishing, *animae magnae prodigus,** in pursuit of the great and the impossible. If, on the other hand, the doctrines of sovereign becoming, of the fluidity of all concepts, types and species, of the lack of any cardinal distinction between man and animal – doctrines which I consider true but deadly – are thrust upon the people for another generation with the rage for instruction that has by now become normal, no one should be surprised if the people perishes of petty egoism, ossification

*'prodigal of a great soul' (Horace, *Odes* I.XII.38), here employed in the sense 'careless of life'.

and greed, falls apart and ceases to be a people; in its place systems of individualist egoism, brotherhoods for the rapacious exploitation of the non-brothers, and similar creations of utilitarian vulgarity may perhaps appear in the arena of the future. To prepare the way for these creations all one has to do is to go on writing history from the standpoint of the *masses* and seeking to derive the laws which govern it from the needs of these masses, that is to say from the laws which move the lowest mud- and clay-strata of society. The masses seem to me to deserve notice in three respects only: first as faded copies of great men produced on poor paper with worn-out plates, then as a force of resistance to great men, finally as instruments in the hands of great men; for the rest, let the Devil and statistics take them! What, can statistics prove that there are laws in history? Laws? They certainly prove how vulgar and nauseatingly uniform the masses are: but are the effects of inertia, stupidity, mimicry, love and hunger to be called laws? Well, let us suppose they are: that, however, only goes to confirm the proposition that so far as there are laws in history the laws are worthless and the history is also worthless. But the kind of history at present universally prized is precisely the kind that takes the great mass-drives for the chief and weightiest facts of history and regards great men as being no more than their clearest expression, as it were bubbles visible on the surface of the flood. Greatness is, under this supposition, the product of the masses, which is to say order is the product of chaos; and it is only natural that in the end the hymn of praise is sung to the masses that produce it. That which has moved these masses for any length of time and has become what is called 'a power in history' is then accorded the name 'great'. But is that not a quite deliberate confusion of quantity with quality? When the rude masses have found some idea or other, a religious idea for instance, to their liking, strenuously defended it and dragged it along with them for centuries, then and only then is the inventor and founder of this idea to be called great. But why! The noblest and most exalted things make no effect whatever on the masses; the historical success of Christianity, its power in history, its tenacity and durability, happily proves nothing with respect to the greatness of its founder, for if it did it would be evidence against him: between him and that historical success there lies a very dark and earthy stratum of passion, error, thirst for power and honour, of the continuing strength of the *imperium romanum*, a stratum from which Christianity acquired the earthly residue and taste which made possible its continuance in this world and bestowed upon it as it were its tenability. Greatness ought not to depend on success: Demosthenes possessed

greatness though he had no success. The purest and truest adherents of Christianity have always hindered and called into question its worldly success and so-called 'power in history' rather than promoted them; for they were accustomed to place themselves outside the 'world' and had no regard for the 'process of the Christian idea'; for which reason they have as a rule remained wholly unknown and anonymous to history. Expressed in Christian terms: the Devil is the regent of this world and the lord of success and progress: in all the powers in history he is the actual power, and that is essentially how it will always remain – even though the fact may be painful to the ears of an age accustomed to the idolization of success and power in history. For it is an age that is practised in bestowing new names on things and has even rebaptized the Devil. It is indeed the hour of a great peril: mankind seems near to discovering that the egoism of individuals, groups or the masses has at all times been the lever of the movements of history; at the same time, however, this discovery has caused no perturbation of any kind, but on the contrary it has now been decreed: egoism shall be our god. In this new faith one is now setting to work with the clearest deliberation to erect the history of the future on the foundation of egoism: only it is to be a more prudent egoism than heretofore, an egoism which imposes certain restraints upon itself so as to ensure its endurance, an egoism which studies history precisely so as to become acquainted with that earlier imprudent egoism. In the course of this study it has been learned that a quite special role in the founding of the world-system of egoism devolves upon the state: it has to be the patron of all the prudent egoisms so as to protect them with its military and police forces against the terrifying outbreaks to which imprudent egoism is liable. It is to the same end that history – the evolutionary history of animal and man – is carefully inculcated into the dangerous, because imprudent, masses and working classes: one knows that a grain of historical culture is capable of breaking down dull and rude instincts and desires or of leading them into the path of a refined egoism. *In summa*: mankind is now, in the words of E. von Hartmann, 'with a thoughtful eye to the future taking into consideration a practical domestic establishment in the earthly homeland'. The same writer calls this period the 'manhood of mankind', and thereby mocks at that which is now called 'man' as though what is understood by this word were simply the sober self-seeker; just as he likewise prophesies an old-age to follow this period of manhood, though again he clearly means only to mock at our contemporary grey-beards: for he

speaks of the mature contemplativeness with which they 'review all the dissolute sufferings of their life's course and grasp how vain were the goals for which they had hitherto supposed they were striving'. No, a manhood of cunning and historically cultivated egoism is followed by an old-age which clings to life with repulsive greed and lack of dignity, and then by a final act in which the

> Last scene of all,
> That ends this strange, eventful history,
> Is second childishness, and mere oblivion,
> Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans every thing.*

Whether our lives and culture are threatened by these dissolute, toothless and tasteless greybeards or by Hartmann's so-called 'men', let us in the face of both of them hold on with our teeth to the rights of our *youth* and never weary in our youth of defending the future against these iconoclasts who would wreck it. In this struggle, however, we shall have to discover a particularly unpleasant fact: *that the excesses of the historical sense from which the present day suffers are deliberately furthered, encouraged and – employed.*

They are employed, however, against youth, so as to train them up to that mature manhood which is striven for everywhere; they are employed to combat the natural aversion of youth to such manly-unmanly egoism by transfiguring the latter in the magic light of science. We know, indeed, what history can do when it gains a certain ascendancy, we know it only too well: it can cut off the strongest instincts of youth, its fire, defiance, unselfishness and love, at the roots, damp down the heat of its sense of justice, suppress or regress its desire to mature slowly with the counter-desire to be ready, useful, fruitful as quickly as possible, cast morbid doubt on its honesty and boldness of feeling; indeed, it can even deprive youth of its fairest privilege, of its power to implant in itself the belief in a great idea and then let it grow to an even greater one. A certain excess of history can do all this, we have seen it do it: and it does it by continually shifting horizons and removing a protective atmosphere and thus preventing man from feeling and acting *unhistorically.* From an infinite horizon he then returns to himself, to the smallest egoistic enclosure, and there he must grow withered and dry: probably he attains to cleverness, never to wisdom. He 'listens to reason', calculates and accommodates himself to the facts, keeps calm, blinks and

*From *As You Like It*, Act II Scene vii.

knows how to seek his own or his party's advantage in the advantage and disadvantage of others; he unlearns unnecessary modesty and thus step by step becomes the Hartmannesque 'man' and then 'greybeard'. But that is what he is *supposed* to become, precisely that is the sense of the cynical demand for the 'total surrender of the personality to the world-process' – for the sake of its goal, world-redemption, as that rogue, E. von Hartmann, assures us. Well, the will and goal of these Hartmannesque 'men' and 'greybeards' can hardly be precisely world-redemption: though the world would certainly be more redeemed if it were redeemed from these men and greybeards. For then there would come the empire of youth. –

10

Mindful of this situation in which *youth* finds itself I cry Land! Land! Enough and more than enough of the wild and erring voyage over strange dark seas! At last a coast appears in sight: we must land on it whatever it may be like, and the worst of harbours is better than to go reeling back into a hopeless infinity of scepticism. Let us only make land; later on we shall find good harbours right enough, and make the landfall easier for those who come after us.

This voyage was perilous and exciting. How far we still are from the quiet contemplativeness with which we first watched our ship put out. In pursuit of the perils of history we have found ourselves most acutely exposed to them; we ourselves bear visibly the traces of those sufferings which afflict contemporary mankind as a result of an excess of history, and I have no wish to conceal from myself that, in the immoderation of its criticism, in the immaturity of its humanity, in its frequent transitions from irony to cynicism, from pride to scepticism, the present treatise itself reveals its modern character, a character marked by weakness of personality. And yet I trust in the inspirational force which, in the absence of genius, powers my vessel, I trust that *youth* has led me aright when it now *compels me to protest at the historical education of modern man* and when I demand that man should above all learn to live and should employ history only in *the service of the life he has learned to live*. One has to be young to understand this protest; indeed, in view of the premature greybeardedness of our present-day youth one can hardly be young enough if one is to grasp what is here really being protested against. An example will help to make clear what I mean. It is hardly more than a century ago that there awoke in some young people in Germany a natural

instinct for what we call poetry. Is it supposed that the generations before them and contemporary with them had failed even to mention that art, even though it was strange to them? The opposite is, of course, the case: they reflected, wrote and argued about 'poetry' with great vigour, producing words about words about words as they did so. This awakening to life of a word did not imply the death of those who awoke it; in a certain sense they are still living, for if, as Gibbon says, it requires only time, though a great deal of time, for a world to perish, so it requires only time, though in Germany, the 'land of gradualness', it requires very much more time, for a false idea to perish. Nonetheless, there are now perhaps a hundred more people than there were a hundred years ago who know what poetry is; perhaps a hundred years hence there will be a further hundred who by then will also have learned what culture is and that the Germans have up to now possessed no culture, however much they may talk and puff themselves up about it. To these people the Germans' universal contentment with their 'culture' will appear as incredible and silly as the once acclaimed classicism of Gottsched or Ramler's reputation as the German Pindar appear to us. They will perhaps think that this culture has been only a kind of knowledge about culture, and false and superficial knowledge at that. False and superficial, that is, because one endured the contradiction between life and knowledge and completely failed to see what characterized the culture of genuinely cultured peoples: that culture can grow and flourish only out of life; while among the Germans it was stuck on like a paper flower or poured over like icing-sugar, and was thus condemned to remain forever deceitful and unfruitful. The education of German youth, however, proceeds from precisely this false and unfruitful conception of culture: its goal, viewed in its essence, is not at all the free cultivated man but the scholar, the man of science, and indeed the most speedily employable man of science, who stands aside from life so as to know it unobstructedly; its result, observed empirically, is the historical-aesthetic cultural philistine, the precocious and up-to-the-minute babbler about state, church and art, the man who appreciates everything, the insatiable stomach which nonetheless does not know what honest hunger and thirst are. That an education with this goal and this result is an anti-natural one is apprehensible only to one who has not yet been fully processed by it; it is apprehensible only to the instinct of youth, for youth still possesses that instinct of nature which remains intact until artificially and forcibly shattered by this education. He who wants, on the con-

trary, to shatter this education has to help youth to speak out, he has to light the path their unconscious resistance has hitherto taken with the radiance of concepts and transform it to a conscious and loudly vocal awareness. But how can he achieve so strange a goal?

Above all by destroying a superstition: the belief in the *necessity* of this educational operation. The usual view is that our present highly disagreeable reality is the only one in any way possible. Examine with this in mind the literature of our higher school and educational system over the past decades: one will see with angry astonishment that, all the varying proposals and vehement contentions notwithstanding, the actual objective of education is everywhere thought of as being the same; that the outcome of education hitherto, the production of the 'educated man' as he is at present understood, is unhesitatingly assumed to be the necessary and rational foundation of all future education. The uniform canon is that the young man has to start with a knowledge of culture, not even with a knowledge of life and even less with life and experience itself. And this knowledge of culture is instilled into the youth in the form of historical knowledge; that is to say, his head is crammed with a tremendous number of ideas derived from a highly indirect knowledge of past ages and peoples, not from direct observation of life. His desire to experience something himself and to feel evolving within him a coherent living complex of experiences of his own – such a desire is confused and as it were made drunk by the illusory promise that it is possible to sum up in oneself the highest and most noteworthy experiences of former ages, and precisely the greatest of former ages, in a few years. It is exactly the same crazy method as that which leads our young painters into picture-galleries instead of into the workshop of a master and before all into the unique workshop of the unique master, nature. As though one could appropriate the arts and sciences of past times, the actual yield of their life's experience, by taking a fleeting stroll through the gallery of history! As though life itself were not a craft which must be learned from the ground up and practised remorselessly if it is not to eventuate in mere babblers and bunglers! –

Plato considered it necessary that the first generation of his new society (in the perfect state) should be educated with the aid of a mighty *necessary lie*: the children were to be taught to believe that they had all formerly dwelt asleep under the earth, where they had been kneaded into shape by nature's workman. Impossible to rebel

against a past of this sort! Impossible to go against the work of the gods! It was to count as an inviolable law of nature: he who is born a philosopher has gold in his body, he who is born a soldier has only silver, he who is born a worker has iron and bronze. As it is impossible to blend these metals together, Plato explained, so it should be impossible ever to mingle or confound the order of castes; belief in the *aeterna veritas* of this order is the foundation of the new education and therewith of the new state. – Now, this is how the modern German believes in the *aeterna veritas* of his system of education, of his kind of culture: and yet this belief would crumble away, as the Platonic state would have crumbled away, if the necessary lie were for once countered with a *necessary truth*: the truth that the German possesses no culture because his education provides no basis for one. He wants the flower without the root and the stem: consequently he wants it in vain. That is the simple truth, a coarse and unpleasant truth, truly a necessary truth.

It is in this necessary truth, however, that *our first generation* must be educated; they will certainly suffer the most from it, for through it they will have to educate themselves, and in opposition to themselves moreover, to a new custom and nature and out of an old and first nature and custom: so that they could say to themselves in old Spanish: *Defienda me Dios de my*, God guard me from myself, that is to say from the nature already educated into me. It must taste this truth drop by drop, like a fierce and bitter medicine, and each one of this generation must overcome himself to the extent of being able to say of himself what he would find it easier to endure if it were said of an entire age: we are without culture, more, we are ruined for living, for right and simple seeing and hearing, for happily seizing what is nearest and most natural to us, and do not yet possess even the basis of a culture, because we are not even convinced we have genuine life in us. Fragmented and in pieces, dissociated almost mechanically into an inner and an outer, sown with concepts as with dragon's teeth, bringing forth conceptual dragons, suffering from the malady of words and mistrusting any feeling of our own which has not yet been stamped with words: being such an unliving and yet uncannily active concept- and word-factory, perhaps I still have the right to say of myself *cogito, ergo sum*, but not *vivo, ergo cogito*. Empty 'being' is granted me, but not full and green 'life'; the feeling that tells me I exist warrants to me only that I am a thinking creature, not that I am a living one, not that I am an *animal* but at most a *cogital*. Only give me life,

then I will create a culture for you out of it! – Thus cries each individual of this generation and all those individuals will recognize one another from this cry. Who is to give them this life?

No god and no man: only their own *youth*: unchain this and you will therewith have liberated life. For life was only lying hidden, in prison, it has not yet withered away and died – ask yourselves if it has!

But it is sick, this unchained life, and needs to be cured. It is sick with many illnesses and not only with the memory of its chains – what chiefly concerns us here is that it is suffering from the *malady of history*. Excess of history has attacked life's plastic powers, it no longer knows how to employ the past as a nourishing food. The evil is dreadful, and yet! if youth did not possess nature's clairvoyant gift no one would know it is an evil or that a paradise of health has been lost. This same youth, however, also divines with the curative instinct of this same nature how this paradise is to be regained; it knows the medicine and balsam against the malady of history, against excess of history: but what is this medicine called?

Now, one must not be surprised to find that it is called by the names of poisons: the antidote to the historical is called – *the unhistorical and the suprahistorical*. And with these names we return to the beginning of our reflections and to its meditative calm.

With the word 'the unhistorical' I designate the art and power of *forgetting* and of enclosing oneself within a bounded *horizon*; I call 'suprahistorical' the powers which lead the eye away from becoming towards that which bestows upon existence the character of the eternal and stable, towards *art* and *religion*. *Science* – for it is science which would here speak of poisons – sees in these two forces hostile forces: for science considers the only right and true way of regarding things, that is to say the only scientific way, as being that which sees everywhere things that have been, things historical, and nowhere things that are, things eternal; it likewise lives in a profound antagonism towards the eternalizing powers of art and religion, for it hates forgetting, which is the death of knowledge, and seeks to abolish all limitations of horizon and launch mankind upon an infinite and unbounded sea of light whose light is knowledge of all becoming.

If only man could live in it! As cities collapse and grow desolate when there is an earthquake and man erects his house on volcanic land only in fear and trembling and only briefly, so life itself caves in and grows weak and fearful when the *concept-quake* caused by science

robs man of the foundation of all his rest and security, his belief in the enduring and eternal. Is life to dominate knowledge and science, or is knowledge to dominate life? Which of these two forces is the higher and more decisive? There can be no doubt: life is the higher, the dominating force, for knowledge which annihilated life would have annihilated itself with it. Knowledge presupposes life and thus has in the preservation of life the same interest as any creature has in its own continued existence. Thus science requires superintendence and supervision; a *hygiene of life* belongs close beside science and one of the clauses of this hygiene would read: the unhistorical and the suprahistorical are the natural antidotes to the stifling of life by the historical, by the malady of history. It is probable that we who suffer from the malady of history will also have to suffer from the antidotes. But that we suffer from them is no evidence against the correctness of the chosen treatment.

And here I recognize the mission of that *youth* I have spoken of, that first generation of fighters and dragon-slayers which will precede a happier and fairer culture and humanity without itself having more than a presentiment of this future happiness and beauty. This youth will suffer from both the sickness and the antidotes: and nonetheless it will believe itself entitled to boast of a more robust health and in general a more natural nature than its predecessors, the cultivated 'man' and 'greybeard' of the present. Its mission, however, is to undermine the concepts this present has of 'health' and 'culture' and to excite mockery and hatred against these hybrid monsters of concepts; and the sign that guarantees the superior robustness of its own health shall be that this youth can itself discover no concept or slogan in the contemporary currency of words and concepts to describe its own nature, but is only aware of the existence within it of an active power that fights, excludes and divides and of an ever more intense feeling of life. One may assert that this youth does not yet possess culture – but for what youth would this constitute a reproach? One may point to its coarseness and immoderation – but it is not yet old or wise enough to moderate its claims; above all, it does not need hypocritically to defend a finished culture and it enjoys all the consolations and privileges that go with youth, especially the privilege of courageous, unreflecting honesty and the inspiring consolation of hope.

Of these hopeful young people I know that they understand all these generalities from close personal experience and will translate them into a teaching intended for themselves; the others may for the

moment perceive only covered dishes that might well be empty: until one day they behold with surprise that the dishes are full and that attacks, demands, life-drives, passions have lain mingled and pressed together in these generalities and that they could not lie thus concealed for very long. Leaving these doubters to time, which brings all things to light, I turn in conclusion to that company of the hopeful to tell them in a parable of the course and progress of their cure, their delivery from the malady of history, and therewith their own history, up to the point at which they will be sufficiently healthy again to study history and, to the ends of life, to employ the past in its three senses, namely monumental or antiquarian or critical. At that point they will be more ignorant than the 'cultivated' people of this present, for they will have unlearned many things and even have lost all desire so much as to glance at that which these cultivated people want to know most of all; from the point of view of these cultivated people, their distinguishing marks are precisely their 'unculture', their indifference and reserve towards much that is of high repute, even towards much that is good. But at this end-point of their cure they will have become *human* again and have ceased to be merely aggregates of humanlike qualities – that is something! That is something to hope for! Do your hearts not laugh when you hope, you hopeful young people?

And how can we attain that goal? you will ask. At the beginning of a journey towards that goal, the god of Delphi cries to you his oracle: 'Know yourself.' It is a hard saying: for that god 'conceals nothing and says nothing, but only indicates, as Heraclitus has said. What does he indicate to you?

There were centuries during which the Greeks found themselves faced by a danger similar to that which faces us: the danger of being overwhelmed by what was past and foreign, of perishing through 'history'. They never lived in proud inviolability: their 'culture' was, rather, for a long time a chaos of foreign, Semitic, Babylonian, Lydian, Egyptian forms and ideas, and their religion truly a battle of all the gods of the East: somewhat as 'German culture' and religion is now a struggling chaos of all the West and of all past ages. And yet, thanks to that Apollonian oracle, Hellenic culture was no mere aggregate. The Greeks gradually learned *to organize the chaos* by following the Delphic teaching and thinking back to themselves, that is, to their real needs, and letting their pseudo-needs die out. Thus they again took possession of themselves; they did not long remain the overburdened heirs and epigones of the entire Orient; after hard

struggle with themselves and through protracted application of that oracle, they even became the happiest enrichers and augmenters of the treasure they had inherited and the first-born and models of all future cultured nations.

This is a parable for each one of us: he must organize the chaos within him by thinking back to his real needs. His honesty, the strength and truthfulness of his character, must at some time or other rebel against a state of things in which he only repeats what he has heard, learns what is already known, imitates what already exists; he will then begin to grasp that culture can be something other than a *decoration of life*, that is to say at bottom no more than dissimulation and disguise; for all adornment conceals that which is adorned. Thus the Greek conception of culture will be unveiled to him – in antithesis to the Roman – the conception of culture as a new and improved *physis*, without inner and outer, without dissimulation and convention, culture as a unanimity of life, thought, appearance and will. Thus he will learn from his own experience that it was through the higher force of their *moral* nature that the Greeks achieved victory over all other cultures, and that every increase in truthfulness must also assist to promote *true* culture: even though this truthfulness may sometimes seriously damage precisely the kind of cultivatedness now held in esteem, even though it may even be able to procure the downfall of an entire merely decorative culture.